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The Magic of Monarchy

Kingsley Martin
EDITOR OF THE "NEW STATESMAN AND NATION"

THE MAGIC OF *Monarchy*



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1937

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The Magic of Monarchy

I

George V *and Edward* VIII

"There must be something more than mere coincidence in the fact that our uncertain weather has been uniformly favourable on State occasions to his late Majesty King George V. . . . The ever-increasing crowds at State functions, involving night vigils in the open air and hours of waiting, must be firm believers in King's weather, and with some justification."—Letter in the *Times*.

"The Rev. David Paterson, preaching in Edinburgh yesterday:—'King George when in Edinburgh on one occasion passed a poor cripple on two crutches. He laid his hand upon his head and said "Courage, my boy. You will perhaps be able to walk all right yet."

" 'It is sometimes said that in a King's hand there is healing. The boy did get better and was able to walk.' "
—Press report, February 1936.

"I wonder how many people appreciated the beauty of London's night sky during Jubilee week? The unusual beauty and brilliance of three planets—Venus setting in the west, Mars overhead, and Jupiter mounting from the east—seemingly contributed their share with the nations' beacons to the tribute to our King. Curiously enough, they obscured their radiance with the

termination of the Jubilee illuminations beneath them on Sunday night."—Correspondent in the *Daily Telegraph.*

"I have seen a number of names suggested for our new princess, the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. Mary, Marina, Helen, Alice have been suggested. In my opinion, none of these sufficiently marks the extraordinary miracle of a royal birth in a time of great national stress."—Letter in the *Observer.*

"I AM COMING OVER FOR THE CORONATION THIS YEAR," writes an American friend, who is an acute and experienced observer of British institutions. "I want to know what has happened to your Monarchy, what effect the abdication of King Edward has had, and what the Coronation really signifies. Until a few years ago I was sure that the British Monarchy was a pretty good institution, a common-sense arrangement which enabled changes to be carried out smoothly under a traditional disguise which deceived nobody. Of course there was plenty of snobbery and silliness mixed up with it, but I am not sure that there is much less of them under our republican system. In spite of all the hooey I always thought that English people knew what they were doing; that they had not forgotten that they deprived one king of his head and another of his throne in order to make it quite clear that he was human, and just the official head of the State whom they delighted

to honour as long as he carried out his ceremonial functions properly. I should take the abdication of King Edward as a confirmation of this view if it were not for some of the things that I read in your newspapers about the Coronation and that I have heard said recently about your kings. Tell me, what was really behind the abdication? Why did the British press keep silent so long? The American newspapers presented the whole business almost entirely as a romantic story from Hollywood. They told us where Mrs. Simpson bought her underclothes and what King Edward ate for breakfast. But there must have been more in it than that. What were the political and constitutional issues involved? And finally, tell me what, in the name of all that is British, the Archbishop of York meant by saying that the King is the 'incarnation' of his people?"

This book is an attempt to answer my friend's questions. It is an examination of the evolution of British opinion about the Monarchy during the last century, and, in particular, during the abdication crisis. I must confess that I, too, was surprised about the Archbishop's remark. His phrase seems strangely mystical. It suggests the doctrine of the scapegoat who bears in his royal person the sins of the people, and whose ritual death was once the condition of tribal prosperity. Of course the Archbishop had no such theory in mind; no doubt he was merely using a familiar phrase, hal-

lowed by religious associations, to imply that the King symbolized national unity. But it was significant of the state of mind into which Britain had been drifting that he should adopt this mystical phraseology about the Monarchy. The Bishop of Bradford, whose remarks about the King's need of divine grace gave the signal to the press to start publicity about Mrs. Simpson, slipped right over the edge into a frankly magical interpretation of the Monarchy. He opposed the suggestion that the Coronation ceremony should be changed to allow Freechurchmen to take part, apparently on the ground that it would in some way be rendered inefficacious if it were not exclusively solemnized by an Archbishop. Its "benefits" would be impaired by the wrong ritual. This conception of the Coronation, as Mr. H. N. Brailsford pointed out, is similar to that of South Sea Islanders, "who regard a coronation as a magical rite conferring on the king the power to control the winds and the rain." Nor are such primitive conceptions confined to the Episcopate. During the last years of King George's reign there was a recrudescence of sheer superstition. A Scottish cleric wrote to the press suggesting that a crippled boy who had learned to walk without crutches might have been cured by the "royal touch," while many people seem to have believed in the providential character of the "King's weather" in 1935. They observed that it was

fine for the King's Jubilee and fine for the funeral; they did not recall that it had not been fine on the day in 1928 when the King caught the cold which began the serious illness from which he never completely recovered his strength.

These, it may be said, are extreme examples. But I could cite many other illustrations of the growth of a magical theory of Monarchy. The most convincing proof is the complete absence of serious discussion of Monarchy in the British press. In the middle of the last century it needed courage to break the religious taboo, to doubt the literal truth of the first chapter of Genesis, or question the scientific basis for belief in the virgin birth. The throne, on the other hand, was frankly criticized in the newspapers and on the platform. In the twentieth century the situation is exactly reversed. Anyone may question the divinity of Christ; but until the advent of Mrs. Simpson no journalist dared to attribute a fault to the King of England, or, indeed, to refer to the character of any royal person except in the whispered undertones of worshippers in a sacred place. The Monarchy had become sacred, its sacred character protected by a taboo. I have known angry readers for ever renounce the pleasure of reading their favourite weekly paper because it was insufficiently respectful to Queen Victoria, who has, after all, been dead for more than a generation and who might now be thought

to have passed into history, while it was regarded as highly improper or even blasphemous to refer in a newspaper to the generally expressed criticism that the B.B.C. was unnecessarily morbid when, at the death of King George V, it cancelled all its programs and lapsed into silence.

This taboo about the Monarchy was so firmly established in England that people would hardly let themselves believe it when they first heard, on December 2, 1936, that there was a serious scandal round the throne and that it might lead to a constitutional crisis. On that night a journalist remarked to a friend, as they came out of a cinema, that the King might abdicate. "Hush, sir; hush!" said a shocked voice behind him. The man in the street had not yet reconciled himself to the fact that the monarchical taboo was shattered. He was still manfully trying to impose silence even though the child had blurted out that the Emperor wore no clothes.[1]

Of course the facts had long been known to the "inside" public. Mayfair, Whitehall, Fleet Street, and Bloomsbury had known and enjoyed the discreetly managed irregularities of King Edward VII; they had for months past revelled in the gossip surrounding his

[1] Interesting evidence of the shock of the crisis is to be found in the increase in unemployment and the spectacular fall in trade during the critical week. People simply left off buying, left off going to the theatres or attending meetings. A publisher told me that he had only *one-tenth* of his usual sales that week.

grandson. Privately in the club and round the dinner-table Mrs. Simpson had long been the most popular topic of discussion. Those who most strenuously maintained a decorous loyalty in public were the most avaricious of scandal about the Monarchy in private. But until December 2 the vast mass of English people had never heard of Mrs. Simpson. The American dailies whose columns were crowded with gossip about the British throne had no general circulation in England, and British wholesale distributors took care to cut out all references to the Monarchy (even if whole pages had to be sacrificed) before they allowed papers like *Time* to appear on English bookstalls. Only those English people who were direct postal subscribers to the American papers, or who received letters, bulky with cuttings, from American friends, knew how widely the scandal had spread on the other side of the Atlantic. The well-informed might nudge each other when they saw Mrs. Simpson's name in the *Court Circular*, or noted her attractive figure in the photographs of the guests at Fort Belvedere, Balmoral, or on the royal yacht, but such indirect references to what an American writer described as "the best news story since the Resurrection" were all that the British press allowed itself.

What was the reason for the silence of the British press—a silence that included the Communist *Daily*

Worker as well as the *Times*? It is usually assumed—most Americans have assumed—that it was the final proof of an unofficial but highly competent form of British censorship. Actually there was no censorship, and official pressure played only a secondary part. We must allow first for the law of libel, which prevented any English newspaper from saying much that was true, as well as much that was false, that appeared in the American press. It was, in fact, extremely difficult to write about the situation without being libellous. I know that the editor of one great London daily wrote and discarded seventeen leading articles on the subject. After the news of Mrs. Simpson's divorce, there was, it is true, an "informal understanding" among newspaper proprietors—there was at no time any action by the Newspaper Proprietors' Association—to give as little publicity as possible to a matter which so clearly threatened the prestige and perhaps even the existence of the British Monarchy. Until the Simpson divorce case there had not been much danger of publicity. No reputable paper would have thought it good circulation policy to print scandalous news about the royal family. It would no doubt have sold for the moment, but it would have led to a storm of protest from readers. The Simpson divorce case, however, was news which it could not be blamed for printing, and much persuasion and many telephone calls following upon

discussions between newspaper authorities and persons in Whitehall and Buckingham Palace were necessary to induce the whole press to give only the minimum of detail, and "play down" the Ipswich divorce. No comment of any sort appeared, even though the case was being featured with immense headlines all over the United States. It may be asked why, even at this stage, the independent weekly reviews and some provincial papers upon which no pressure of any sort was brought and which were not members of the Newspaper Press Association remained silent. I can only imagine that their editors and proprietors were influenced by the same motives that decided me to say nothing in the *New Statesman and Nation*. It was not until I heard privately that the King had made up his mind to marry Mrs. Simpson that I felt I had any right to discuss the matter. Friends told me that the King was a happy man for the first time in his life. Why should the press interfere with a lot of tittle-tattle? It was the private affair of the King and the Simpsons. But the suggestion of marriage made all the difference. The King's marriage was obviously a question of the greatest public interest which had to be fully discussed.

The taboo once broken, an honest analysis becomes possible. People who would have been shocked at any

question about the Monarchy before the abdication of King Edward may now be prepared to ask themselves how it has come about that the Crown, so freely criticized in the middle of the last century, has gained its modern sacrosanct character.

The first point on which anyone who attempts such an analysis must insist is that the feeling of reverence, and indeed of love, for King George V was strong and widespread. It is not to be confused with the passing interest which, for instance, the newspapers succeeded in stimulating in the marriage of the Duke of Kent and Princess Marina. Fleet Street gossip said that the business of this marriage was journalistically overdone, and shopkeepers have told me that they were left with quantities of Marina postcards and Marina souvenirs which the largest headlines could not sell. I even heard fears expressed among public officials that the Jubilee might also prove something of a fiasco. King George himself is said to have been alarmed at the magnitude of the preparations, and surprised, as well as moved, by the overwhelming response which he actually received from the public. The Jubilee turned into a carnival such as London had not known since Armistice night, 1918. For several days the traffic in some of the busiest West End streets was stopped. The police were the centres of good-humoured ragging. There was comparatively little drunkenness and an immense and

spontaneous demonstration of good humour.[1] Yet it was only at the King's death that we could gauge the strength of popular affection for the King. The Jubilee jollifications were, after all, conceivable for some other cause. When George V died, however, no one who talked to his neighbour on the bus, to the charwoman washing the steps, or to the sightseers standing on the street corner could doubt the almost universal feeling of loss. Nor could any perceptive observer fail to notice the peculiarly personal character of this emotion. People who had never even seen the King and who had only heard his voice over the radio talked about him with tears in their eyes as if he were a personal friend or near relative cut off in his prime. Propaganda, no doubt, accounts for much, and I shall have more to say about its effects later on. But no propaganda could create this type of personal emotion unless the conditions were peculiarly favourable. Propaganda can exploit, spread, and intensify an existing emotion. It cannot create when the materials are lacking.

[1] Those who are interested in anthropological parallels may amuse themselves with looking for signs that the Jubilee acted as a "release," a festival when the usually forbidden becomes permissible. I take the following quotation from the *Evening Standard* during Jubilee week:

"A curious method of honouring the Jubilee has been adopted at Southport. The magistrates there have decided that during the celebrations, children over fourteen shall be allowed to see films licensed for adults only."

Nor is it enough to talk of the practical utility of monarchical institutions, or to urge a text-book theory that the King is the bond of Empire and the symbol of national unity. The advantages of Constitutional Monarchy are, it is true, more obvious in the post-war than they were in the pre-war era. If we drop the trappings of Monarchy in the gutter, as one radical put it, Germany has taught us that some gutter-snipe (or house-painter with a mission) may pick them up. Such practical considerations may explain why those who guide public opinion strain the resources of propaganda to cultivate an emotional loyalty, but they do not explain the basis of that loyalty.

I think the clue is to be found, perhaps, in a remark that one heard very frequently at the death of George V. People constantly reiterated that King George "was a father to us all." A curious process of identification of royal family life with the individual life of the subject had taken place. In his *Autobiography* Mr. H. G. Wells describes his mother, who followed everything in the life of Queen Victoria with a passionate loyalty, as seeing in the Queen a "compensating personality," an ideal example of the sort of mother that she would have herself liked to have been. To such people the royal family provides a colour and a splendour which their own family lives too often lack, but which they none the less feel to be part of their own romance.

Thus it comes about that when the personal and public character of the King is of the appropriate pattern, there is a natural tendency, which propaganda could easily exploit, to see in him the ideal personification of those qualities which are most admired in contemporary society. In the sixteenth century men welcomed Tudor tyranny because it was a guarantee of order after a period of baronial wars and depredations, because it enabled the emergent middle class to win wealth and glory at the expense of foreign enemies and gave a prospect of stability and prosperity to the future. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this public wanted a Constitutional Monarchy which would prevent religious differences from throwing the country into chaos, and preserve the new structure of society in which traders, merchants, and industrialists could exploit the new possibilities of wealth while the aristocracy and gentry maintained their political power. In the nineteenth century the fear of Pope and priesthood had sunk into abeyance, and the new conception of democracy made the conception of royal authority out of date and repugnant. The public was prepared to accept the Monarchy only on the understanding that it did not interfere with politics. Political leaders were now elected and responsible. Three centuries earlier the hereditary principle had been a guarantee against the intrigues of ambitious men; secure against these,

the public saw hereditary Monarchy as a survival to be maintained only as an agreeable constitutional device and as a useful focus of national loyalty. But they maintained it on two conditions—that the Monarchy played no personal part in the political battle, and that the character of the monarch was one they could respect. It was only when they were sure that these two conditions were fulfilled—and they were not sure until the second half of the nineteenth century—that the politically conscious democracy of Great Britain could allow itself to indulge its natural capacity for devotion to an ideal personality.

Modern methods of propaganda have been used to the utmost to exploit this situation. One can easily imagine circumstances in which all the resources of publicity would have been used to hide far worse defects in the character of a king than those which became apparent in Edward VIII. Broadly King Edward's abdication was due to two causes. It happened that those in control believed that on balance it would be safer for England not to attempt to keep on the throne a King who proved so willing to leave it and who was so uncertain to fulfil the role which they now required from the King of England. A different set of rulers at a different stage of political development might have seen advantages in using the King for the creation of a new type of British Monarchy. For a few days there

seemed to be the danger of the formation of a political party to exploit the Monarchy for the purpose of a campaign against democratic institutions. The balance of power, however, at the time of comparative economic prosperity, was in the hands of Mr. Baldwin and his friends, and they certainly represented the majority of English opinion in wishing to maintain the democratic *status quo*. The second point which emerged indisputably in the crisis was that, given the facts, the mass of British people preferred the King's abdication to the retention on the throne of a man whose personal life reflected that of smart society rather than that of Puritan England. "Modern ideas"—they are not really modern at all—have not been accepted except by small sections of the British public.

No one, as far as I know, has so ably analysed the psychological basis of Constitutional Monarchy as Dr. Ernest Jones. In a recent article he pointed out that the problem of government has always been made difficult by "man's constantly double attitude towards it." He has "very deep motives for wishing to be ruled." Feeling unequal to the task of controlling either his own or his neighbour's "impulses," he looks to an outside authority to shoulder the responsibility. But as soon as the "restrictions of authority are felt to be oppressive, he is impelled to protest and clamour for freedom." This internal conflict is most obviously ex-

pressed in relation to a father figure. It needs no deep analysis to discover that in adult life men unconsciously regard their rulers as they have regarded their fathers in childhood. They see them as more benevolent or more cruel or more magically powerful than they in fact are, and they feel towards them sometimes an irrational adoration and sometimes an exaggerated hate. Dr. Jones points to the remarkable strength of Constitutional Monarchies which have survived, while Tsars and Kaisers and Sultans, who were supposed to be secure in the adoration of their subjects, have passed almost unnoticed away. He attributes this partly to the fact that under a Constitutional Monarchy the citizen is continuously provided with an outlet for both adoration and patricide. He can safely adore the King as sacrosanct and above criticism, because he can at the same time attack his ministers and throw them out of office when he pleases.

Any study of the history of Monarchy in England at once reveals that as long as the King was identified with the Executive he was always subject to attack from every radical element in society. It is only since the death of Prince Albert, seventy-five years ago, that people have ceased to fear royal interference and have therefore ceased to attack the Crown and gradually allowed themselves to give full rein to their natural tendency to look for a figure above the political struggle

whom they can adore without reserve. This adoration of the Crown could never have grown to its present astonishing proportions had not the last three ruling sovereigns fitted so well the popular conception of what a monarch should be. In Queen Victoria people were able to picture the perfect model of English motherhood. In Edward VII they saw a man who had outlived the follies of youth before he came to the throne (he had been publicly hissed as Prince of Wales), and had become, they believed, the most genial type of sporting English gentleman.[1] As for George V, he was, as they put it, "a good living man," and his family life a model of what Puritan England regards as the best. His recreations were those of a country gentleman, his qualities, tastes, and pursuits just those which the mass of his subjects approved. A French commentator called him "the Crowned Bourgeois"—the unostentatious but dig-

[1] One of the surest signs that popular emotions are deeply stirred is the appearance of street broadsheets. Their interest to the historian lies in their spontaneity and illiteracy. The *Week-End Book* (Random House) gives the text of a broadsheet sold at the funeral of Edward VII. It shows the same "father image." Here are the last two verses:

> Greatest sorrow England ever had
> When death took away our dear Dad;
> A king was he from head to sole
> Loved by the people one and all.
>
> His mighty work for the nation
> Making peace and strengthening union—
> Always at it since on the throne
> Saved the country more than a billion.

nified and self-effacing public servant, much less of an institution than his grandmother, but increasingly thought of as a fine old gentleman whom the public could trust and venerate, the King who never interfered in politics, but whom it could safely adore as the father of his people.

When we realize that King George V had become the perfect father figure, the benign symbol of personal joys and sorrows, it becomes possible to understand the serious psychological adjustment that had to be made in greeting the new King. As Prince of Wales, Edward had been a wonderfully popular figure. He was known all over the Empire as the Smiling Prince, who would mix with anybody and always be refreshingly natural and unceremonious. But his qualities were quite different from those of George V.

Informed people were aware that the intimate advisers of the Crown were worried by the King's choice of friends, by his unconventional views, and by the impossibility of being sure that the Prince of Wales would behave as king in the way expected of the King of England. He stood for a new kind of king; his popularity was far less symbolic and much more personal than that of King George. He might, perhaps, become a champion of youth and of modern ideas. He did not disguise his distaste for much of the appropriate ritual. His speeches were freshly worded and seemed often to

have been written by himself. It was no accident that in his Declaration of Abdication King Edward omitted the conventional formula: "King . . . by grace of God, Defender of the Faith." He did not regard himself as Defender of the Faith. His father could use these phrases, and speak of God's care for his people and his country with simplicity and sincerity. King George's Christmas broadcasts, greatly appreciated by the mass of his subjects, showed the same unthinking acceptance of the eternal truths of the Anglican creed that had characterized the utterances and correspondence of his grandmother. But Edward VIII had reacted against the domination of a puritanical father just as his grandfather had reacted against the teaching of Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. He was the product of a new age, and the fear that an unconventional attitude, and perhaps an unconventional private life, might damage the success of his reign was unmistakably apparent in the nice balance of adulation and admonition achieved in the accession speeches of the Prime Minister and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Looking back on the story today, we see that Edward VIII was incapable of carrying on the pious and domestic pattern of his father's reign. It is interesting to speculate whether, if he had been a stronger and more responsible person, he could have gained an equally firm hold on the affections of the British people

by a different type of appeal. He could not be a father figure like George V. Could he, within the limits of the British Constitution (which he had no thought of flouting), have created a more personal and democratic type of monarch, appealing to the young rather than to the old, symbolizing the rise of a new and less conventional generation? He was unconventional. Unlike his brothers, he had refused exceptional treatment during his university career and had joined in the ordinary life of contemporary undergraduates. The holidays he enjoyed were those in which he might wear shorts and an open shirt. No monarch since George III (and George III was insane at the time) had walked about unattended among common people in the streets. Some have seen in this unconventionality the possibilities that the King of England might have developed along the line of the Scandinavian monarchs, who may be rung up on the telephone or seen riding along the road on a bicycle. King Edward's gifts did not make him popular with established "Society." But Prince Charlie himself had not a more natural way of charming common folk. His sympathies were unusually wide, and he had shown, while Prince of Wales, that he was concerned with causes which royalty is usually too discreet to acknowledge. He upset many conservative people by contributing to the Miners' Relief Fund during the strike of 1926. On a visit to Vienna he went out of his

way, even at the cost of annoying his Fascist hosts, to interest himself in the Karl Marx Hof which had recently been shelled when the Social Democrats were shot down by the Heimwehr. I do not mean that such incidents—in which one may include the final visit to South Wales—show that the King was a Socialist or anything of that kind. They meant only that he was sincerely interested in the welfare of common people, and naturally cut out for a more personal kind of kingship than that to which Britain had been accustomed. They were also alarming to vested interests and to advisers whose ambition was to maintain the constitutional and economic *status quo*.

King Edward's dislike of humbug was one of his most attractive characteristics. But it was an awkward characteristic for a King, for there is a large ingredient of humbug in most ceremonies, and kingship is predominantly a ceremonial institution. If the King had wished to reduce or modify the ceremonial functions expected of him, he might perhaps have done so with the exercise of much policy and tact. If he had made it clear that he only intended to make public appearances on occasions when he felt, as he clearly did in South Wales, that his presence would have a valuable social effect, he would have fluttered some official dovecotes, but he might have increased his popularity with the majority of his subjects and rid us of much trouble-

some humbug. But Edward VIII did not do this. His behaviour was capricious and sometimes gave an appearance of irresponsibility.

On a number of occasions his impatience of ceremony and his insistence on doing what he felt inclined to do led to awkward public incidents. He deeply offended a number of débutantes by his perfunctory recognition of their existence at the Buckingham Palace Garden Party, when he allowed a shower of rain to act as excuse for cutting short a ceremony in which he scarcely pretended to be interested. He aroused much criticism in Scotland by deciding at the last minute to leave an important engagement to his brother although he was himself in the neighbourhood at the time, and he disappointed the London crowd by driving quickly by on his way to the opening of Parliament. People naturally recalled his father's scrupulous observance of such public duties in very much heavier rain. Nor could any King of England afford the gossip that gathered round some of his parties at Fort Belvedere or that pursued the royal yacht in the Adriatic.

The impression gained growth that he did not take his duties with adequate seriousness, and it was this apparent absence of responsibility, apart altogether from his friendship with Mrs. Simpson, that worried Mr. Baldwin and others of his advisers. It may be doubted, however, whether Mr. Baldwin and other Ministers who

had served King George V could ever have reconciled themselves to "the king on the bicycle" theory of monarchy, even if Edward had consistently or seriously held it. The King of England, after all, is not like the King of Denmark. He is also the Emperor of India and the centre at which is gathered the loyalty of millions of people of many colours and many creeds. It was inevitable that Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop should have been fearful of any new conception of Monarchy and should have seen danger in any king who was not married and who could not be built up as George V had been as the father of his people and the pattern of all the virtues. In losing Edward VIII, England played for safety first.

II

The Defeat of British Republicanism

ONE RESULT OF KING EDWARD'S ABDICATION WAS THAT republicanism was again debated in the British House of Commons. Forgetful of their own history, most English people regarded such a debate as a strange and rather shocking novelty. But it was a revival, not an innovation. There was an active and quite respectable republican party in England in the 'seventies. Indeed, the dominant political philosophy of the nineteenth century assumed that the establishment of a republic was the natural corollary of democracy, and it was widely believed only seventy years ago that Britain would soon follow the French example, and that Queen Victoria would be the last British monarch. It is the popularity of Monarchy that is the novelty, not the republicanism.

In 1854 the Crown was so bitterly attacked in the newspapers that Queen Victoria threatened to abdicate, while in the period immediately preceding her accession no one except court sycophants could find a word to say in favour of any member of the royal family. A

century ago Monarchy had broken both the rules which, I have suggested, are the necessary basis for its popularity in a democratic country. The morals of the sons of George III shocked and disgusted even the less puritanical standards of the pre-Victorian period, and their interference with politics and their obstructive attitude towards reforming legislation were sufficient to complete their unpopularity.

Nothing could more simply illustrate this change in the popular attitude than the contrast between the tone and the sentiments expressed when George V died and those expressed at the death of George IV a century earlier. The mourning bands of the *Times* of June 28, 1830 were as black and as conspicuous as those of January 20, 1936, but the tribute of black edges in 1830 was not found incompatible with a realistic description of the King's amours, an outspoken condemnation of his behaviour to his wife, who had found her place taken at court by a "fashionable strumpet," or with the remark that "the fact that he existed so long might, considering the habits of his earlier life, be looked upon as an extraordinary proof of the original vigour of his constitution." On the day of his funeral the "leader" in the *Times*, which was still in deep mourning, said that:

> "There never was an individual less regretted by his fellow-creatures than this deceased King.

What eye has wept for him? What heart has heaved one sob of unmercenary sorrow? . . . Has not his successor gained more upon the English tastes and prepossessions of his subjects by the blunt and unaffected—even should it be grotesque—cordiality of his demeanour, within a few short weeks than George IV—that Leviathan of *haut ton*—ever did during the sixty years of his existence? If George IV ever had a friend—a devoted friend in any rank of life—we protest that the name of him or her never reached us. An inveterate voluptuary, especially if he be an artificial person, is of all known beings the most selfish. Selfishness is the true repellant of human sympathy. Selfishness feels no attachment, and invites none.

"Nothing more remains to be done or said about George IV, but to pay—as pay we must—for his profusion: and to turn his bad conduct to some account by tying up the hands of those who come after him in what concerns the public money. At all events we shall always to the utmost of our power do our duty—and we think we are unlikely to do it flinchingly." [1]

[1] Several things are remarkable in this comment. It is not only that we cannot today imagine the *Times* indulging in such phraseology in regard to a member of the royal family, even if one today should deserve as little reticence as George IV. It is not only that monarchy has regained its divinity, but that we have all become squeamish and less vigorous critics. In 1929 Lord Snowden created an international crisis

The *Times,* which had always championed Queen Caroline in her long struggle with George IV, was particularly severe, but it would be easy to parallel its comments from other contemporary sources.[1]

by using the word "grotesque" about a French Minister's proposal for a financial settlement; in 1830 the *Times* inserted it as a parenthetical comment upon the manners of a monarch who had been only on the throne a fortnight. Of course, the adjective was apposite; Greville tells us how during the first ceremonials William IV, pleasant and jovial contrast as he was to his late brother, and capable on occasion of presiding "very decently" and looking like a "respectable old admiral," frequently caused so much embarrassment by his odd behaviour and extraordinary utterances that ministers would beat a retreat, hide themselves, or cover their faces with their hands when he opened his mouth. His most amiable utterances were sometimes disconcerting; in reply to a deputation of Freemasons who came to offer their loyal obedience, William said: "Gentlemen, if my love for you equalled my ignorance of everything about you, it would be boundless."

[1] The *Spectator,* which took the opposite side and supported George IV against Queen Caroline, nevertheless gave a list of the King's mistresses and said of His Majesty:

"A very nice attention to the rigidities of moral observance can hardly be asked from one who, to the vigour of youth and an eminently handsome person, unites a complete command of fortune, and whose will every man who surrounds him is more anxious to flatter than to regulate. The King at a very early period of his life gave evidence of his fondness for female society; a failing of all others the most excusable, but it not unfrequently brings down on its possessor a degree of censure that the colder and darker vices of a disposition inherently evil do not provoke."

Of William IV the *Spectator* wrote:

"On the throne as in private life, William IV appears to have been a good-hearted man with frank impulses and kindly feelings; willing to do right but not unfrequently doing wrong from want of knowledge and strength of mind. He had little information and strong prejudices. Though sufficiently conceited and self-willed, he was easily imposed upon and led by the designing."

And:

"His late Majesty, though at times a jovial and, for a king, an honest

The eighteen-thirties mark the nadir of English Monarchy; for the republican and democratic sentiments—the two in those days seemed synonymous—which had swept through middle-class England after the French Revolution were re-emerging from the repression of the Napoleonic Wars at a moment when the royal family was politically and personally disreputable. The outburst of enthusiasm which made a heroine of Queen Caroline was due not so much to love of the Queen as to hatred of the King. And the public was right in detesting, not merely George IV, but most of the other sons of George III. It would not so much have minded their sordid private lives if they had not continuously asked the House of Commons to pay their debts; it would have tolerated the fantastic Toryism of the one-eyed Duke of Cumberland if it had not known that he worked on George IV to resist Catholic emancipation, and it would merely have laughed at William IV if he had not thrown in his lot with the peers in obstructing the Reform Bill. To the followers of Paine and Godwin, kings were the very symbol of tyranny and corruption. To overthrow the King seemed the first step in the recovery of the natural rights of man. Shelley

man, was a weak, ignorant, commonplace sort of person. . . . Notwithstanding his feebleness of purpose and littleness of mind, his ignorance and his prejudices, William IV was to the last a popular sovereign, but his very popularity was acquired at the price of something like public contempt."

spoke for insurgent England when he wrote: "Oh, that the free would stamp the impious name of king into the dust." And Thelwall epitomized a common sentiment when he blew the froth from his beer and said: "So would I treat all kings."

The more sober disciples of Bentham, who reached almost equally democratic conclusions by more laborious steps of argument, concluded that Monarchy was an indefensible anomaly. If the greatest happiness of the greatest number was the criterion of government, then a majority decision must always be better than a minority one. All secret influences, all minorities in privileged positions, were "sinister," and the least defensible and most sinister of all was the influence of a single man wielding a final veto and an incalculable influence over political decisions.

If the King exercised power, he interfered with the automatic perfection of democratic machinery; if, on the other hand, he was obedient to his democratically selected ministers, why pay him for doing nothing? According to the mathematical reasoning of Bentham and James Mill, it was conclusively demonstrable that Monarchy was the worst possible form of government; majority government meant that the will and, therefore, the happiness of the majority would be obeyed; in an oligarchy only the pleasures of the minority would be served; in a Monarchy, by definition, the general hap-

piness would defer to the wishes or influence of one man and his immediate entourage. It is to be noticed that when Macaulay unmercifully ridiculed James Mill's mathematical demonstration of the advantages of democracy, he attacked his method of reasoning and not his conclusions. He was content to point out that if the thesis of democracy were pushed too far, the rule of the middle class might not be as safe as Mill assumed, since, in the long run, the interests of the majority were antagonistic to the privileges of property. It was not until 1867 that Bagehot took the first step towards modern theory and shifted the ground to the psychological argument that the Crown was really paid not to exercise a specific function, but to act as a symbol of unity and retain the loyalty of "the labourers in Somerset" who could not understand the process of government, but who could respond to the drama of royalty and feel a primitive and sentimental loyalty for the personality of the Queen.

It is often, but wrongly, assumed that attacks on the Crown ended with the disappearance of the disreputable sons of George III. In fact republicanism remained part of the accepted creed of the radical middle and working class until the middle of Queen Victoria's reign. It is often forgotten that the Reform Bill of 1832 was regarded merely as the beginning of revolution which would lead on not only to universal suffrage, but also to the Disestablishment of the Church and the

abolition of all hereditary institutions, including the House of Lords and the Monarchy. The Chartist Movement, already well under way when the Queen came to the throne, did not include the abolition of the Monarchy in the six points of the Charter only because it assumed that Monarchy, like other mediæval relics, would disappear when the working class attained political power. Working-class newspapers such as *Reynolds's* were outspokenly republican, and their anti-monarchic sentiment was echoed in other papers whenever there was the least hint that the Crown was taking a hand in government. Lytton Strachey has rightly remarked on the effect of Victoria's accession. Here was "a girl Queen, innocent, modest, with fair hair and pink cheeks" in place of "the nasty old men, debauched and selfish, pig-headed and ridiculous, with their perpetual burden of debts, confusions and disreputabilities." They "had vanished like the snow of winter, and there at last, crowned and radiant, was the spring." But the affection shown to the Queen at her accession did not prevent people calling "Mrs. Melbourne" after her when she appeared in public during her struggle with Sir Robert Peel over the Bedchamber question,[1] nor did it prevent the most vehement attacks

[1] Cf. the following from *Punch*, November 6, 1841, during the first pregnancy of the Queen. The future Edward VII was born on November 9.

"THE LORD MAYORS AND THE QUEEN

"The interesting condition of Her Majesty is a source of the most

on her husband when he was believed, as a foreigner, to be interfering with the supposedly liberal policy of Lord Palmerston. Palmerston, at the height of his popularity as Foreign Secretary, had made himself the champion, in words at least, of the Liberal cause on the Continent, and allowed it to be known that the court objected to the friendly reception that he was prepared to give to men like Kossuth and Garibaldi. When, because of his incorrigible habit of sending foreign dispatches abroad without giving the Queen and Prince Albert the opportunity of objecting to them, he was

agonizing suspense to the Lord Mayors of London and Dublin, who, if a Prince of Wales is not born before their office expires, will lose the chance of being created baronets.

"According to rumour, the baby—we beg pardon, the scion of the House of Brunswick, was to have been born—we must apologise again, we should say was to have been added to the illustrious stock of the reigning family of Great Britain—some day last month, and, of course, the present Lord Mayors had comfortably made up their minds that they should be entitled to the dignity it is customary to confer on such occasions as that which the nation now ardently anticipates. But here we are at the beginning of November and no Prince of Wales. We have reason to know that the Lord Mayor of London has not slept a wink since Saturday, and his Lady has not smiled, according to an authority on which we are accustomed to rely, since Thursday fortnight. Some say it is done on purpose, because the present official is Tory; and others insinuate that the Prince of Wales is postponed in order that there may be an opportunity of making Daniel O'Connell a baronet. Others suggest that there will be twins presented to the nation, one on the night of November 8, the other on the morning of the 9th, so as to conciliate both parties, but we are not at present disposed to pronounce a decided opinion on this part of the question. We know that politics have been carried most indelicately into the very heart of the Royal household. But we hope, for the honour of all parties, that the confinement of the Queen is not made a matter of political arrangement."

summarily dismissed in 1851, he declared himself a victim of foreign intrigue, and the chief impact of the incident, which the pundits of the moment thought had ended his career, was to reinforce his popularity as a sporting champion of Liberalism and to put into people's heads the idea that the British court was conspiring with Continental courts to frustrate the wishes of British democracy. Thus, when he resigned on the eve of the Crimean War, it was almost universally believed that he had been again dismissed by the Crown. So violent was the outcry of the press that the Queen, outraged by daily accusations that her husband was a traitor in league with foreign governments, wrote long letters to the Prime Minister, threatening in words, even more undisciplined and heavily underlined than usual, to abdicate the throne and abandon her ungrateful people.[1]

Albert was un-English, unfashionable, serious, aca-

[1] The full story of this incident is to be found in my *Triumph of Lord Palmerston* (New York: Dial Press, 1924). The text of the letter referred to above is worth quotation.

On January 4 she wrote to the Premier:

"The Queen had hoped that the scandalous attacks which had appeared immediately after the resignation of Lord Palmerston against the Prince in several (though none of the *most* respectable) papers would cease, and, indeed, *had* done so, but she has been mistaken; she perceives that a *systematic* and *most infamous* attack appears daily in *The Morning Herald* and *Standard,* and she, therefore, can no longer *doubt* that there is some design in *this,* which, as Lord Aberdeen will easily believe, she DEEPLY *resents.*"

She felt that the more serious charges should be met: Albert should

demic, humourless, unco guid, and given to science and philosophy. His unpopularity enabled the press

be given a constitutional position.

"Therefore, upon mature reflection, and after considering the question for nearly eleven years, I have come to the conclusion (and I know the Prince has also) that the *Title* which is now by *universal consent* given him of '*Prince Consort*' *with the highest rank in and out of Parliament,* IMMEDIATELY after the Queen, and before EVERY OTHER PRINCE of the Royal Family, should be the one assigned to the HUSBAND of the QUEEN REGNANT *once and for all.*"

Lord Aberdeen was sympathetic and believed that the attack would die down. The *Times,* at any rate, represented serious opinion and would take no part in the agitation. But Delane was not sufficiently cautious. In defending Prince Albert he admitted difficulties in the Prince Consort's constitutional position.

This wrung another letter from the Queen, who complained that the Government had allowed even the *Times* to print a "very injudicious article." "If the country," she proceeded, "*really has* such incomprehensible and reprehensible notions, there is no remedy but the introduction of the *Salic Law,* for which *she* would *heartily* vote. A *woman must have* a support and an adviser; and *who can* this *properly* be but her husband, *whose duty it is* to *watch over her interests private and public.* From this *sacred* duty NO EARTHLY POWER can absolve him! Were it not for the Prince the Queen's health and strength would long since have sunk under the multifarious duties of her position as Queen and the mother of a large family. Were the Queen to *believe* that these unprincipled and immoral insinuations really were those of *any* but a wicked and despicable few, she would LEAVE a position which nothing but her domestic happiness could make her endure, and retire to private life—leaving the country to choose another ruler after their own HEARTS' CONTENT. But she does *not* think so ill of her country, though she must say that these disgraceful exhibitions will leave behind them *very bitter* feelings in her breast, which time alone can eradicate!

"If the whole *is* brought before Parliament, which would be better but which seems almost doubtful now, the Queen hopes it will be on the first *night* of the Session, and done with.

"The Queen encloses an extract from her journal of the year 1841 giving *Lord Melbourne's* opinion of the Prince and his position; the Prince was only twenty-two then!" (Quoted from *Triumph of Lord Palmerston,* pages 210–12.)

to attack the Prince in language it would scarcely have used against the Queen herself. Today we may hold that Albert was justified in trying to stop the most futile and silly war in our history. At the time the populace saw the situation in simple and dramatic form as the battle between the reactionary forces led by the infamous Tsar and supported by the Prince Consort, and Liberalism championed by Palmerston and strangely personified in the Sultan of Turkey. The papers, some of which, in the early stages of the attack, were directly inspired by Palmerston himself, talked of "treachery in high places," of the "hidden power," and of "a certain illustrious personage" who had "a third key to the dispatch box." They said that he thought "none but Germans have the right or title to interfere in the government of this country," and traced his foreign connection and accused him of being a tool of the Tsar. This is the last scurrilous attack on the British Monarchy. Albert's patriotism during the war won him public respect, if never affection. We must remember that, outrageous though the attack was, it had on one point real justification. The position of Prince Albert was anomalous. No one knew whether he was to be considered only as the private counsellor of the Queen, as he necessarily had to be, or whether he had a constitutional right to exercise any part of the royal prerogative. In spite of a Parliamentary debate

which satisfied the Queen, this point was never cleared up. On the particular issue which led to the attack, Albert was in the right, but the public was justified in fearing the close contact between the British throne and the reactionary heads of Continental governments. If more had been known of the influence of Baron Stockmar, Albert's mentor, who held strong views about the power which he thought still belonged to the British Crown and about the Queen's correspondence with her uncle, King Leopold of the Belgians, the attack would have been even more bitter and more dangerous to the throne.

The vehement radicalism which had been stirred up by the revolutions of 1848 and turned into passionate indignation against all tyrants and despots in the reaction of 1849 gathered itself, ironically enough, round that persistent Whig, Lord Palmerston, and worked itself out in futility in the Crimean War. But it remained the dominant creed of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie in the 'sixties. It was kept alive in the struggle for Italian independence by the popular hatred of tyrants like Bomba, when Gladstone protested against the horrors of Neapolitan prisons, and by the visits to England of men like Mazzini, Kossuth, and Garibaldi. Sometimes it was the Tsar who appeared as the personification of reactionary tyranny, sometimes the Emperor Napoleon III. When Simon Ber-

nard was tried for complicity in Orsini's attempt to murder Napoleon III, he was triumphantly acquitted by a Middlesex jury, although all the evidence pointed to his guilt. Every popular rising on the Continent was enthusiastically welcomed. The *Times* during the great period when it was edited by Delane was almost as fierce in denouncing despots as the cheaper and less respectable press. When Garibaldi came to England in 1864, he was received as if he were a British instead of an Italian national hero, and he had to be hurried out of the country for fear of international complications.

It was the fall of Napoleon III after Sedan that gave for the moment political importance to English republicanism. Young men like Charles Dilke, John Morley, and Frederic Harrison, not long down from Oxford, had associated themselves closely with the intellectuals who led the struggle against tyranny on the Continent. And they regarded the establishment of the Third Republic in France as a suitable moment for a declaration of republicanism at home.[1] The Prince of Wales,

[1] The poet of British Republicanism was Swinburne, whose revolutionary enthusiasm came from early intimacy with Victor Hugo, Mazzini, and other Continental Liberals. Frederick Harrison and other Comtists, intellectual heirs of the French Revolution, were under no delusion that Palmerston would help the Republican cause. *The Bee-Hive*, a remarkable Trade Union paper with well-known middle-class contributors, joined with Harrison, Beasly, and George Potter in urging British intervention on behalf of the Italian and Polish revolutions.

whose private life was an open subject of comment, seemed to them as well as to many more cautious Radicals quite unsuited to succeed his mother. And with the political philosophy of the day generally conforming to the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, it seemed a natural enough assumption that when the Queen died —an event which was expected before very long—Britain would follow the French example and peacefully declare itself a republic. The first move in the campaign was to set up republican clubs, mainly of a working-class character, in important centres throughout Great Britain. The first club was established in February 1871 in Birmingham, and by the spring of 1873 more than fifty clubs had been set up in such places as Aberdeen, Plymouth, Norwich, and Cardiff. They were particularly strong in Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Northumberland. The veteran working-class leader George Odger joined hands with Bradlaugh to organize public meetings, and Bradlaugh, who had just published an attack on the British Monarchy, entitled *An Impeachment of the House of Brunswick,* was carrying on a vigorous campaign throughout the country. Capital was naturally made out of Disraeli's unfortunate defence of the Queen on the ground that she was "physically and morally incapacitated from performing her duties." And Bradlaugh expressed his "earnest desire that the present Prince of Wales should

never dishonour this country by becoming its King." With five years' education, he believed that England would be ready for a republic.

In November 1871 Sir Charles Dilke entered the lists with a speech at Newcastle, where Joseph Cowen already had a large republican following. Dilke argued that England was now to all intents and purposes herself a republic. "Have we not," he asked, "republican virtues and republican spirit? Have we not the practice of self-government? Are we not gaining general education? Well, if you can show me a fair chance that a Republic here will be free from the political corruption that hangs about the Monarchy, I say, for my part —and I believe the middle classes in general will say —let it come." In this speech, as he himself admitted afterwards, Dilke made one mistake. Referring to the Queen's enormous wealth and the large income which the State gave her, although she no longer performed even ceremonial functions, Sir Charles asserted that she paid no income-tax—a statement which gave Mr. Gladstone an effective debating answer when the matter was discussed in the House of Commons a few months later. Sir Charles's speech was severely criticized in the press. If the Crown, said the *Times*, were again to show a disposition to meddlesome obstructiveness like that of George III, or if the private life of the monarch resembled that of George IV, the establish-

ment of a republic would be a contingency to be faced. In the absence of such a contingency (which God forbid should ever arise) "it was recklessness bordering on criminality" to raise the question. Sir Charles Dilke must either openly declare for a republic (which he did not do) or refrain from vilifying the Monarchy. It was, of course, possible that a republic might come, and it was regrettable that the Queen was unable to discharge her duties and retired to Balmoral or Osborne when she was most needed in or near London. Of course she made every effort to work. But "we have pointed out before and we point out again that no feeling of loyalty, however fervent, can be proof for ever against such a strain." If Dilke wanted to raise the question of the civil list, he was entitled to do so in the House of Commons; it was wicked to do so before an audience of working men.

Dilke was by no means abashed, while colleagues in the campaign wrote and congratulated him. Chamberlain wrote: "the Republic must come, and at the rate at which we are moving it will come in our generation. The greater is the necessity for discussing its conditions beforehand and for a clear recognition of what we may lose as well as what we should gain."

Morley, who had become editor of the *Fortnightly Review*—and in those days the political thinking of England was done in such periodicals—wrote to Fred-

eric Harrison for a long article setting forth the argument for a British republic. In the event two articles appeared. They stand as the peak of British republican thought in the nineteenth century. They rebuked Disraeli for trying to elevate the throne and for introducing "intentional unction into the accepted language of homage." In a sentence which reads ironically enough today, when we know the part that the Queen really played in government, Harrison wrote that "the sovereign is as much bound to keep his feelings to himself as any well-bred young lady. In consequence the influence of the throne, whatever it may be socially is nothing politically. . . ." Disraeli was attempting "to inscribe 'the Throne' as a new watchword on the banner of his party . . . the formation of a genuine Beefeater-party whose political mission is to rally round the throne, is certainly a new feature in Party history." The task of a republican was "to lift the subject from the cataract of cant in which it had been drowned. In the truest sense of the word, this country is and has long been a Republic, though an imperfect Republic it must be allowed . . . England is now an aristocratic Republic, with a democratic machinery and an hereditary grandmaster of the ceremonies. For a Republic is that State the principle of which is not privilege but merit, where all public power is a free gift and is freely entrusted to those who seem able to

use it best." Monarchy in England had merely become a survival, an "otiose tail," a rudimentary organ atrophied for want of use. "The most silent member of Parliament has more legislative power than the Crown." The Crown had some appearance of power at a change of ministry, but the actual control was in the hands of the outgoing Prime Minister. "In extreme case a venerable peer—a sort of family lawyer—is confidentially called in." If the Crown were "to insist on personally nominating a minister . . . the very lawn of the bishops would ruffle in wrath—we may, however, be perfectly tranquil, no sovereign is likely to attempt any gambles with the Constitution any more than the Queen's coloured horses are likely to kick to pieces the ginger-bread coach. Are we poor people not to laugh?"

By the time these words appeared in print, the little wave of republicanism had fallen back into the eternal ocean of sentimentality. The effect of Dilke's speech was more than counteracted by the long and dangerous illness of the Prince of Wales at the end of 1871. The position of the Queen again evoked widespread sympathy and there was a general rally in the press to the side of the throne. The more extreme radical papers were not, it is true, much affected. *Reynolds's* spoke of "the mean, toadying, craven spirit of so-called loyalty." They objected "to the great epidemic of typhoid

loyalty." The Prince was supposed to have caught infection from the drains; ordinary people died daily from such infection and no one noticed it. They hoped that if the Prince recovered, he would spend the ability that he had so far shown at Hurlingham in getting a pure water supply for the people. So far, "he has been weighed in the balance by the large majority of the people and found sadly wanting." They hoped that Dilke, like Latimer, had "by God's grace, lighted a candle in England which would never be put out." [1]

Encouraged by his reception from working-class audiences, Dilke continued his campaign. On November 23 he held a great meeting at Leeds, in which he declared that his main object was to defend the right of free speech even in relation to the Crown. On December 6, at a meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall, with Joseph Chamberlain as mayor in the chair, several hundred interrupters had to be turned out by the police. From the time of the Prince of Wales's illness, the tide flowed steadily against the republican group.

The issue was debated in March 1872, when Dilke

[1] Cf. also an interesting and forgotten book entitled *Our New Masters*. It is a study of working-class opinion at the time of the Education Bill of 1870. The author declared that *Reynolds's* and the *Bee-Hive* were the only papers representing working-class opinion, which was republican—merely another name for Utilitarian. He remarks of the illness of the Prince of Wales that the more extreme among working people were not sure that they wanted the Prince to recover, since his death would save the country forty thousand pounds a year.

defended his attack on the civil list. His idea was, he said, to make his speech "solid and full of matter but studiously dull." He was seconded by Auberon Herbert, a charming and unusual figure in politics, an aristocrat, philosopher, and artist. The debate was constantly interrupted. Attempts were made to count out the motion three times. Strangers were "spied" and the galleries cleared. Henry Fawcett, who had founded a republican club in Cambridge, refused to support Dilke, because he was determined "in the most emphatic way possible to protest against the question of republicanism being raised upon a miserable haggle over a few pounds." Gladstone replied with great vehemence and sarcasm, paid compliments to the Queen, denied Dilke's allegations about income-tax, and asked whether it was decent "to reopen a life-bargain with the sovereign."

This was not the end of English republicanism. In 1873 a republican conference met at Birmingham and entrusted Bradlaugh with a message of congratulation to the new republican Government in Spain. The opposition to Parliamentary grants to members of the royal family on obtaining their majority or on marrying continued and was supported in the House of Commons by a considerable group of members. It should be remembered that at this time the annual Budget only amounted to some seventy millions, and that the cost

of the royal family was about a million a year. A number of special royal expenses were not included in the civil list and appeared under other items in the estimates. The attack was never socialist; on the financial side it was merely the logical extension of Gladstonian finance. The object was to reduce taxation at a time of depression when people were actually dying of starvation. The more courageous radicals hoped to improve prosperity by reducing an item of public expenditure which amounted to one-seventieth of the whole Budget. It must be remembered, too, that these intermittent attacks upon increased grants to members of the royal family were one expression of the last stand against the growth of imperialism. Radicals watched with dismay while Disraeli brought the Queen from her retirement and made her Empress of India. They did not know how far his flattery went, they certainly never guessed that she was being told every day that she was the real ruler of England, and they had no conception to what length of interference, and indeed of unconstitutionality, she was prepared to go when a Liberal Ministry, which she hated, was substituted for the Government of her beloved Lord Beaconsfield. But they protested, and on this issue had some of the Tories with them, against the Royal Titles Bill, and they did what they could by rallying behind Gladstone to check Disraeli's autocratic conduct of foreign policy. Parlia-

ment was studiously neglected while Beaconsfield, acting on behalf of the Queen, made a treaty with Russia, summoned Indian troops to Malta, and bought the stock that gave Britain control of the Suez Canal. Discontent was apparent in the unfavourable reception given to Volume III of Theodore Martin's *Life of the Prince Consort,* which was generally interpreted as a message from the Crown to the nation. In 1879 the House of Commons actually debated the dangerous growth of the power of the Crown. On the economic side, the demand for the reduction of the civil list continued until 1885, when Bradlaugh took his seat and reinforced the republican group in the House. Gladstone, who could have re-created republicanism by telling a tithe of what he suffered from the Queen, was a devout royalist and an unusually scrupulous politician. He held his tongue, and Disraeli's brilliant manœuvre, when he brought the Queen from her retirement and in a single speech identified Imperialism with Conservatism and associated them both with loyalty to the Monarchy, was allowed to succeed. Only a few years ago he had himself spoken of the "wretched colonies" as a "millstone round our necks." He had thus accepted the common view of Conservative as well as Liberal politicians and permanent officials of the Colonial Office, that as colonies grew up they would necessarily break with the mother country. It was his peculiar genius to

see in 1872 that the new imperialist movement which had been growing in the 'sixties in the minds of federalists like Froude, Sir George Grey, and W. E. Forster might be made into an asset for the Conservative Party.

We must not, of course, attribute too much to Disraeli. Republicanism would have failed and the new imperialism won in any case. Many things conspired to check the growth of the republican creed. As the golden age of Victorian prosperity waned and the influence of German thought, after the triumph of Bismarck, gained ground, the modified Hegelianism of T. H. Green took the place at Oxford of the Utilitarianism of Mill, while Socialism won its way as the working-class creed in the place of the old-fashioned radicalism. We may detect deep economic causes behind these developments; it is easy to see why British manufacturers and merchants, whose virtual monopoly of the raw materials and markets of the world was now challenged by the competition of Germany, America, and Japan, were likely to turn to a creed that made for the consolidation and extension of the British Empire. Economic historians choose 1870 as a convenient date to mark the second industrial revolution. With the home market satiated, British capitalism turned to undeveloped Africa. Politically we see the change epitomized in the transference of the middle-

class vote of Birmingham from the pacifist free-trade Little Englandism of Bright to the protectionist imperialism of Joseph Chamberlain. There were strong forces at work; the last anti-imperialistic Government of England, Gladstone's second Ministry, failed, not because of Gordon, or the Irish, or the Queen, but because Liberalism had no policy with which to meet the new Empire problems which arose in South Africa and the Sudan. And when Liberalism was again returned with a triumphant majority twenty years later, it was led by men who had learned the new Imperialistic philosophy at Oxford and whose ideas were as remote from those of Gladstone and Mill as from the republicanism which had seemed to Dilke and Chamberlain at the beginning of their careers to be the inevitable creed of the future. Nevertheless, Disraeli's part in 1872 was important. What Disraeli did in his Crystal Palace speech was to blend into one vast imperial whole the problem of the white dominions, the problem of Ireland, the problem of the Near East, the problem of India, and finally, by a stroke of genius, the problem of the Queen's relationship to her subjects. Henceforward it was impossible to induce anyone to think clearly and coolly about any of these issues. It became impossible to hint at the necessity of Home Rule in Ireland, or to demand better government in India, or to discuss the ethics of British occupation

of Egypt, without being charged with disloyalty to the Queen. To turn an intelligent imperialist movement into a popular jingoism, which bore fruit in the Boer War, was the immediate result of Disraeli's exploitation of the Crown.

Propaganda for the Empire and for the Monarchy went hand in hand. The Crown had become a symbol of national greatness. Very few people had any idea that it was more than a symbol. They did not know that it also exercised a direct influence on the course of British policy.

III

What Does the Sovereign Do?

WRITING ON THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION IN 1866, Walter Bagehot said that there was "no authentic, explicit information as to what the Queen can do, any more than what she does," and he summarized all that was known of the functions of the Monarchy as "the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn." We have seen that even so well informed a critic as John Morley could believe in the same period that the Queen did, in fact, almost nothing, that she was a ceremonial cipher, and that Britain was already a republic, thinly disguised. It is only in the last decade, since the publication of Queen Victoria's letters, that the public has had the chance of learning how far Morley was wrong. It has not been possible until today to supply that information, the lack of which Bagehot noted seventy years ago.

It becomes clear as we study the correspondence of the Queen that her popularity and her comparative immunity from criticism in the latter part of her reign were due less to her own wisdom—she was a shrewd

but not a wise woman—than to the loyalty and chivalry of her Prime Ministers. One is impressed first by the extraordinary amount of delay and difficulty she caused in the conduct of government. Her correspondence over ecclesiastical appointments would by itself fill a book, and she exercised an important influence on the personnel of British representatives in foreign countries. She was as insistent in small matters as in great. She clung to special prerogative in regard to the army (a point which she had learned from Baron Stockmar), and wrote urgent letters on questions of army dress and on the wearing of beards in the navy. Until extreme old age she never relaxed her conscientious determination to see all documents, even when in days of slower communications the delay in reaching her at Osborne or Balmoral was apt to be serious. She attempted, with some success, to veto Cabinet appointments. In 1880, when Gladstone had won a triumphant majority, she wrote to Disraeli that she would "take no notice of Mr. Gladstone, who had done so much mischief. It is most essential that that should be known." When finally she was forced to accept Mr. Gladstone, she obstructed a number of his appointments, objecting to both Chamberlain and Dilke on the grounds of their former republican opinions, and insisting on a letter of apology from Dilke before she finally agreed to his appointment. She even tried to

interfere with minor government appointments which, as Mr. Gladstone was at length driven to protest to a colleague, were only submitted to her at all by courtesy. Her influence on legislation was seldom important, but it is to be noticed that the Public Worship Bill was introduced at her wish and against the advice of her Prime Minister. Her activity in the Schleswig-Holstein question—her attitude here, as so often, was dictated by her memory of Prince Albert's opinions—led to a debate in the House of Lords, where Lord Ellenborough, to the Queen's indignation, criticized the interference of the Crown. Her detestation of republicanism added to the difficulties of British relationships with France and the United States.

On occasions she behaved with complete disregard for the Constitution. In 1880, after a delirious period in which Disraeli had flattered her into a belief that "the course of a Ministry depends on the will of the Queen," she found herself confronted with a resolute Liberal Government pledged to a number of measures which she regarded as dangerous and subversive. Her obstruction did not stop at Cabinet appointments. She objected to everything; at length even Mr. Gladstone ventured to remind her that the "powerful circles in which your Majesty has active or personal intercourse" contained hardly any persons who understood the point of view of the majority of her subjects who had recently

returned him to office. During the long controversy over the Sudan she expostulated day and night, and when Gordon was killed almost compelled Gladstone to resign by telegraphing her anger *en clair*. Her conduct on several occasions showed that she had no scruples about violating her Constitution when she was sufficiently roused and felt safe from exposure. She wrote privately to Lady Wolseley advising Lord Wolseley, then in command of her forces in the Sudan, to coerce the Government by threatening to resign if he did not obtain a free hand he demanded. And in order to make sure that she should not to be found out, she instructed Lady Wolseley to burn her letter. And in December 1885 the Queen suggested to Harcourt (while Gladstone still had a majority) that a moderate Whig-Conservative coalition should be formed, in order to defeat Home Rule. Shortly afterwards, when the fall of Lord Salisbury's first Government seemed probable, she appealed to Goschen to arrange an alliance between the Liberal Unionists and Conservatives against Mr. Gladstone and Home Rule. In this remarkable letter we see her surreptitiously and without the advice of her Prime Minister attempting to promote a "loyal" and "constitutional" National Government, in order to defeat the Liberal Party. Nor is her correspondence with Lord Salisbury asking whether the Unionist Party was "fit for an election now" if she

forced a dissolution on a Parliament with a Liberal majority, reconcilable with even the broadest interpretation of the functions of a Constitutional Monarchy.

Her excuse on such occasions—when she wrote to Lord Derby about Mr. Gladstone's policy or congratulated Harcourt on a speech attacking the Prime Minister—was that these subjects, foreign affairs and Home Rule, were not "party questions." But the truth is that when the Liberals were in office the Queen never regarded herself as bound to behave impartially or even constitutionally. She was a vigorous woman with deep conservative prejudices; she was the least "impartial" of mortals and fought against Liberalism bitterly and unscrupulously, only taking care that her opposition should not be public and only giving way when she had no alternative.

That there was not an open scandal during Mr. Gladstone's 1880–5 Ministry was due to the Prime Minister's remarkable loyalty and chivalry. The Queen complained of Palmerston's "impertinence" when he was almost eighty years of age. After he had gone, there was no one left to be impertinent. Mr. Gladstone suffered from the reverse fault. The Queen's aversion to him was due, not only to a divergence of opinion or even to his habit of addressing her like a public meeting, but more to his meticulous care in writing to her like a firm of lawyers. His labyrinthine sentences, his

firstlies and sixthlies, finally drove her to despair and to the comforting help of Sir Theodore Martin. Mr. Gladstone never discovered by long and wearisome experience the fact that Disraeli knew at once by instinct that the Queen, who by tradition had the right to demand a personal letter every day from her Prime Minister describing events in the House of Commons, really wanted, not a reasoned memorandum, but a comforting word of reassurance that all was well with the Monarchy and the Empire. Night after night, after long hours of the most exacting labour, the indefatigable old man sat up into the small hours carefully elaborating arguments which he must have known would have no influence with the Queen, and which were, in fact, often unintelligible to her.[1] No wonder that he did on one occasion privately describe her demands and her obstructionism as "intolerable" and "enough to kill a man." Yet to her he was never anything but patient and courteous; his veneration for the

[1] Mr. Michael MacDonagh in his book *The English King* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1929) tells a story of the Queen which, whether authentic or not, precisely illustrates her vigorous if illogical mind. A burglar had killed an old woman by tying a handkerchief round her mouth. Her false teeth had slipped down her throat and suffocated her. He was tried for murder and convicted. But as it was clear that the gag had been intended to silence and not to kill, the Home Secretary commuted the sentence to penal servitude. The Queen, who never much liked letting anyone off anything, objected. "I maintain," she said, "that old ladies who wear false teeth are entitled to the protection of the law."

Crown never left him, and deeply wounded though he was when, after a lifetime of devoted public service, the Queen accepted his resignation without a word of appreciation, sympathy, or gratitude, his only request, noted in his diary, was that the details of his painful relationship with her should be kept secret. We owe to Mr. Guedalla the knowledge of a passage of quite unusual beauty in Mr. Gladstone's diary.[1] After describing how he once rode all day for two or three weeks on a mule in Sicily, he wrote:

> "We rode usually with little interval from 6 a.m. to 4 p.m., and its undemonstrative, unsympathetic service was not inefficiently performed. In due time we arrived at Messina to take our departure for the Island. There my mule and I of necessity parted company.
>
> "But I will remember having at the time a mental experience which was not unlike a turn of indigestion. I had been on the back of the beast for many scores of hours, it had done me no wrong; it had rendered me much valuable service, but it was in vain to argue; there was the fact staring me in the face. I could not get up the smallest shred of feeling for the brute; I could neither love it nor like it.

[1] *The Queen and Gladstone*, by Philip Guedalla (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1934).

> "A rule of three sum is all that is necessary to conclude with. What the Sicilian mule was to me, I have been to the Queen; and the fortnight or three weeks are represented by fifty-two or fifty-three years."

Enough has been said to show that the Queen interpreted the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn as the right to obstruct, the right to bully, and the right to go behind her Ministers' backs when their politics were displeasing to her. In the last resort, in both home and foreign affairs, a Prime Minister could, of course, get his own way, but often only at the expense of a lengthy and delicate combat. An important point must be added. The Queen's views were Conservative and opposed to the main tendencies of the century. But her prejudices and her conventions were exactly those dominant in her age; she seemed, indeed, to embody its very nature in her own person. Her influence, moreover, was almost always in the direction which middle-class sentiment would have approved. Though she took far more direct part in government than was generally ascribed to her, the popular conception of her character was, on the whole, remarkably accurate. She spoke, one feels, with the whole authority of her age when she refused Sir Alexander Cockburn a peerage because he had been immoral in his youth; when she opposed the idea of a

Channel tunnel because "if England is to be connected with the Continent, we shall have to keep up double the army, which we so unwillingly afford now"; when she argued against a tax on matches because it would drive some of "the very poorest people and little children" out of work; when she declared it "monstrous" that there should be no legislation to prevent railway accidents when Mr. Gladstone was merely passing laws about education; when she admitted that Lord Lytton, who had provoked a war with the Afghans, had disobeyed the Cabinet in so doing, and then added: "Now, of course, we must punish the insult, and support Lord Lytton." When has a period ever been so accurately named as the Victorian Age?

Thus it came about that the public made her a symbol of the prosperity of their Empire, and that the prestige of the Monarchy increased when its power declined. For in spite of the Queen's tenacity and vigour, her direct part in politics inevitably grew less as she grew older. A series of powerful ministers, a firmer party organization, a growing system of civil service administration, and a vast increase in the business of the State, all necessarily meant that the Queen's word counted for less in practice in the last decade of the century. But the magic of Monarchy increased as its political power declined. In her later years when the Queen appeared in public—at the Diamond Jubilee, for instance—she

received an overwhelming ovation. Sir Charles Dilke's discussions of her income, and the once fashionable talk of republicanism, had long died and were forgotten before the appearance of majesty itself. The clerk in Shoreditch felt the glamour of Monarchy as keenly as the labourer in Somerset.

When the Queen died, British Monarchy had won a new and overwhelming prestige. Her great age, her perfectly representative character, and the prosperity associated with her reign and the whole social tendency from *laissez-faire* Liberalism to the new popular imperialism—all combined to stifle any breath of criticism and to endear her to her subjects. Edward VII, therefore, ascended the throne with the advantages and the disadvantages of a great, indeed an overwhelming, example to live up to. If the Queen had died twenty or thirty years earlier the history of British Monarchy might have been very different. The Queen had not then won a quarter of the adoration that was hers in 1900, and the Prince of Wales was then still considered an unsatisfactory and unstable young man who was involved in public scandal and had had to write to the Archbishop of Canterbury promising to give up his favourite game of baccarat. We can even, by not too great an effort of imagination, picture a nineteenth-century crisis, with Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury instead of Mr. Baldwin as Prime Minister, not so very

different from the crisis that actually developed fifty years later when another Edward ascended and then abdicated the throne. But King Edward VII had reached a comfortable middle age by the time he came to the throne; he had made a popular marriage and learned that discretion which, in royalty, will always suffice to soothe the conscience of Prime Ministers and Archbishops. His education, as we know today, had been deplorable, and its rigours had not been relaxed after the death of the Prince Consort. But a series of strict disciplinarians, selected to guide his footsteps into the paths of learning and moral endeavour, had never succeeded in teaching him the lesson that his father and mother had tried to implant on his seventeenth birthday. He never believed, as the royal birthday memorandum put it, that "life is composed of duties." For him it was composed of interesting pleasures—yachting, racing, the night-life of Paris. In the intervals he took up philanthropy, patronized artists' societies, served on a Housing Commission, and even visited the slums incognito. For thirty years he fought for the right to see Cabinet papers, but it was not until the Queen was over seventy that she gave way. She resisted every effort made on his behalf by Prime Ministers who liked Edward and wished for an experienced King. Lord Spencer and Mr. Gladstone wanted him to go to Ireland. Loyalty, they thought, would blossom wherever Mon-

archy trod. The Queen, who bravely accepted this thesis, went to Ireland in her old age, refused to allow the Prince to go, though, to be sure, she wrote saying that anything which took him "away from the London season" would be a good thing.

To the Queen, nothing the Prince did was right. If he amused himself, she upbraided him. "I fear, dear Mama," he wrote at the age of twenty-eight, "that no year goes round without your giving me a jobation on the subject of racing." If he showed a desire to take his duties seriously, she was no better pleased. She replied that it was unconstitutional for him to know secrets of State, and that it was dangerous too, since anyone so addicted to pleasure and so unreliable as the Prince could not possibly be discreet. In truth, the Queen, who did not willingly surrender anything, knew that the performance of a public function by the Prince necessarily enhanced his importance as well as his popularity, and this, she felt, was to diminish her own prerogative.

The lack of responsibility and the lack of a Cabinet key did not, however, prevent Edward from gaining a good general knowledge of foreign and home affairs. It also encouraged him to make what would today perhaps be called "exotic friendships" with pleasure-seekers and adventurers, of whom General Gallifet was typical enough. The worst aspect of those friendships

was Edward's good-natured attempts to procure posts for men whose principal qualification was his liking for them. On the other side, it is fair to note that Edward, both as Prince of Wales and as King, had a happy knack of making friendships with men of very different types, with Mr. Gladstone, with those former republicans, Dilke and Chamberlain, and later with some of the leaders of organized Labour. When he came to the throne he showed none of his mother's arrogant and unconstitutional temper; his private life was far from correct, but it was always discreet, and if he showed an excessive concern about ceremony and could be vehement on questions of precedence and dress, these were only the harmless relics of a time when control of such matters was the final test of power. We must remember that with the vast growth of public business the twentieth-century monarch never attempted, as Queen Victoria had done up to her old age, to "see everything." We do not know enough yet fully to judge what actual influence on events Edward VII and George V had, but we know that it was not of comparable importance to that exercised by Queen Victoria.

Today we may smile at the legend that Edward VII played an important part in foreign affairs. We should have known it for a legend even if we had not Mr. Balfour's word for it. If we must give a meaning to the title: "King Edward the Peacemaker," we should have

to say that his detestation of his nephew, the Emperor of Germany, and his love of France (which has sometimes been confused with his appreciation of the entertainments of the Moulin Rouge) helped to cement the Triple Entente and aggravate British relations with Germany. For the rest, it is clear that he contrived to be on excellent terms with ministers of both parties, interested himself in social work as well as in racing, and fulfilled the ceremonial functions of his office with grace and even with distinction.

The first important constitutional crisis of his reign occurred only shortly before his death. It occurred when it became clear in 1909 that the House of Lords intended to throw out Mr. Lloyd George's Land Budget, and that Mr. Asquith was equally determined to force the House of Lords to give way and, if necessary, permanently to curtail its powers. In this instance we are fortunately in the position to know what went on behind the scenes. The *Letters of Lord Esher* are among the most illuminating documents that exist for understanding the government of England. Lord Esher, whose main concern was to build up the Committee of Imperial Defence, was an intimate friend of King Edward and of the leading Conservative ministers, as well as of all the important people in the services. He also made it his business to make friends with key persons like Haldane and Morley when the Liberal Govern-

ment of 1906 came into power. Lord Esher was a far-seeing man and held with the King that it would be most dangerous and unwise for the Lords to throw out the Budget. But when it was suggested that in that event Mr. Asquith might ask the King for a promise to create peers if the Lords did throw out the Budget, Lord Esher characterized the suggestion as monstrous, and the King appears to have taken the same point of view.

It was assumed by all parties, through the House of Lords crisis, that it was the King's business to seek an accommodation between the two Houses, and there were ample precedents during Queen Victoria's reign for the monarch seeing Opposition leaders in the course of negotiations, provided that the Prime Minister knew that he was doing so and was informed of the substance of the conversations. On one critical occasion, however, when the King wished to see the Tory leaders, Mr. Asquith only reluctantly agreed, after sending the King a memorandum drawing the distinction between "seeking advice" and "desiring knowledge" from the Opposition. The King accepted the distinction and did not attempt to act as arbiter. As it turned out, Asquith was justified in his fear that an attempt would be made at this interview to divert the issue and weaken the King's resolution. But the King seems fully to have realized that the only safe and constitutional course was for him on all occasions to make it clear that he would follow

his Prime Minister's advice.[1]

Lord Esher's advice to His Majesty was that if the Government were to ask the King to promise to create peers before a General Election, His Majesty "should meet them with a firm refusal." He thought that if the Government resigned before the election because of the King's refusal, the King would be supported "by this country and all over the Empire." In an illuminating passage in a letter to his son Lord Esher wrote: "About February 10th the Prime Minister will be asking the King for a promise to create peers. That is *certain.* If the King says yes, he mortally offends the whole Tory Party to which he is naturally bound. If he says no, he lets loose all the Radical gutter Press at his position as Sovereign and his person as man. A charming dilemma, full of revolutionary possibilities. We have never been nearer a revolution since 1688. . . ." [2]

After the temporary truce which followed King Edward's death King George V insisted on an election before creating peers. As Mr. Lloyd George and other statesmen have recently revealed, the bias of the King was so heavily in favour of the Tory Party that Liberal ministers were by no means sure that he would agree

[1] *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith,* by J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, Vol. I, pages 305–7 (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1932).

[2] *Letters of Lord Esher,* Vol. II, pages 433–4 (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934).

without a struggle, even if the election gave them a substantial majority. Lord Rosebery, who was in a position to know, held that if Mr. Asquith had been returned at the second election with a majority of even five less than he had had at the first election, the royal prerogative would not have been exercised in his favour.

Lord Esher's advice throughout the dispute, and his remark about the King's natural leaning towards the Tory Party, certainly support the contention that Monarchy, even at its most constitutional, is always liable to be a handicap to progressive forces, and that there are always influences round the King urging him discreetly to fight on the side of Conservatism. It is incidents of this kind that justify Sir Stafford Cripps's much criticized reference to obstructive influences which a Socialist Government would be likely to encounter in Buckingham Palace circles. The full danger can most readily be understood by a study of the incident of the Curragh mutiny in 1914. During the Ulster crisis responsible Conservative leaders like Lord Halsbury and Bonar Law supported the treasonable utterances of Lord Carson, F. E. Smith, and Joynson-Hicks, who were urging Ulster to resist Home Rule by force. They also committed themselves to the dangerous proposition that the King still had a veto and should use it. The Diaries of Sir Henry Wilson show that there were soldiers recklessly ready to promote a civil war and that they

hoped that the army would follow them on the plea that they were obeying the personal wishes of His Majesty against those of his Government. It was natural in these circumstances that Liberal politicians and Liberal newspapers should have even regarded with suspicion the King's sensible decision to try to settle matters at a Buckingham Palace Conference. The European War ended the crisis, and nothing yet published suggests that the King either behaved unconstitutionally or was prepared to do so. But the incident remains as a warning that unscrupulous persons may appeal to the personal loyalty of soldiers and sailors to the Crown against the Government which represents the electorate whose servants, the King, the Government, and the armed forces alike must be.

As we know today, since the publication of the *Life of Lord Oxford,* an extraordinary divergence of views still existed in 1913 about the powers remaining to the sovereign. In the crisis of 1913 many "elder statesmen" were called in to give advice. All of them, Lord Oxford's biographers remark, "strove to be impartial, but as the records show, their views of what the Crown might do were generally in accord with what they wished it to do." [1] Lord Lansdowne took the extreme line that since the Parliament Act had destroyed the

[1] *Life of Lord Oxford,* by J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, Vol. II, page 25.

power of the Lords to kill a bill, the power reverted to the Crown: the King, in his opinion, could force a dissolution or insist on a referendum. Mr. Balfour drew characteristically delicate distinctions. The King could not safely demand a dissolution since that would reveal to the public his conflict with his Ministers and bring him into party warfare. But he could show his impartiality by addressing a letter to the public saying that he thought the country should be consulted. Mr. Bonar Law held the King could dismiss his Ministers, even though they had a Parliamentary majority, dissolve Parliament, and ascertain the popular will. In the opposite camp Lord Rosebery and Lord Oxford were, of course, sure that it was unconstitutional for the King to refuse the royal assent. It may be said that this was as much in their interests as the opposite view was in the Conservatives' interest. But I cannot myself see any answer to the simple argument that for the King to refuse his Prime Minister's advice means the extinction of democratic institutions. It would also be fatal to the Crown, which would be drawn inevitably into Party politics. If the King has the power to insist on an election against his Prime Minister's advice, then he takes sides, and his position as impartial head of the State disappears, with consequences that are incalculable except in so far as they make certain that the party which has been thwarted by the King must attack the

King, and, willy-nilly, become in effect a republican party. Mr. Asquith's memorandum on this subject is final. The veto had not been used since the reign of Queen Anne. The only occasion in modern times on which the King had changed a Ministry which still commanded a Parliamentary majority was in 1834; the results, as might have been expected, were wholly detrimental to the Crown, which had, in fact, to accept defeat and give in to the triumphant majority. The only possible rule for a Constitutional Monarch was that the King must take the Premier's advice.

Several interesting constitutional issues have arisen which seem to me to confirm, not to throw doubt on, the universal applicability of this rule. On one issue—the choice of a new Prime Minister when there is doubt about the leadership of the party with the largest Parliamentary representation—the outgoing Prime Minister may not be considered the proper person to give advice. For the sovereign to make a personal decision on such occasions does not bring him into the field of Party warfare, and there is, in fact, no doubt that in this situation the King has the right of individual choice. King George was personally responsible for entrusting the formation of a new Conservative Government in 1923 to Mr. Baldwin, rather than to Lord Curzon, just as Queen Victoria was personally responsible for summoning Lord Rosebery in 1896.

A more interesting question arose in 1924, when Mr. Asquith, as leader of the Liberal Party, in the House of Commons, displayed the frailty of human nature by urging that in the conditions of three-party government the King had the right to refuse a dissolution to the defeated Prime Minister and to call upon leaders of other parties to attempt to form a Government. Surely the fundamental principle which he himself laid down in 1913 applied here too. For if the King had refused Mr. MacDonald a dissolution and called upon Mr. Asquith to form a Government, the inevitable result would have been to proclaim the King a partisan and to bring him into the party arena. The result might well have been better for the Labour Party, but it would certainly have been disastrous for the Monarchy.

About the third incident, the part played by the Monarchy in arranging the National Government in 1931, we still know too little. It is undoubtedly a serious innovation, as Professor Laski and others have pointed out, that a Prime Minister, who must hold his position in virtue of the fact that he is the leader of the largest party in the House of Commons, should form a new Government without the consent, or even the knowledge, of his own party. We know today that manœuvres for forming a National Government had been proceeding for months before the actual crisis in August 1931. And we cannot doubt that the King played an important

part in the final arrangements. But the King has the right to advise, and even if, in fact, the arrangement which had brought together Mr. MacDonald, Mr. Baldwin, and Sir Herbert Samuel was actually managed by the King or members of his immediate entourage, I can scarcely see that he was behaving unconstitutionally. I can see danger in such manœuvres, but I do not see that the King can be held responsible. Constitutionally he must be presumed to have been taking his Prime Minister's advice. It may be demanded that the King should always subordinate his own will on public issues to the will of the Prime Minister, but it cannot be demanded that he should exercise no influence on the Prime Minister's decision. That would be to demand that the King should have no opinions and no personality, that in spite of a continuous experience of political life that may well be longer than that of the Prime Minister, he should be a "rubber stamp." That he cannot always be a rubber stamp is at once the advantage and the danger of a monarchical system. It may be an argument for a republic, but as long as we have a King, he will exert private influence, and it will be impossible to define the legitimate use of the influence as narrowly as we can define it in the case of a president.

Constitutional experts may find many points in these events that are still worth argument, and when more facts are known, no doubt there will be room for more

argument. But from the angle of public opinion, which is under discussion here, there is no doubt that Edward VII was successful in sustaining the popularity of the Monarchy, which had reached such peak heights before the death of Queen Victoria; and that of George V actually enhanced it. The effect by the end of George V's life was, as we have seen, to change the rational attitude towards Monarchy which was still dominant only sixty years ago into an uncritical adoration. In the 'seventies people were still discussing whether the ceremonial functions, what were thought to be all that remained to the Crown, might not in the future be more cheaply exercised by a president. In the post-war period of George V's reign such an economic argument is almost unimaginable. The Monarchy, it seemed, had reached perfection. The two vital conditions which I discussed in the first chapter of this book seemed to have been perfectly attained. The King reigned but did not rule, and the character of the royal family was precisely that which the bulk of the public approved. Labour, once so ready to attack the snobbery and secrecy that surrounded the court, was as ardently royalist as Conservatism itself. What would be more striking than the change from Keir Hardie to Mr. MacDonald and his colleagues going to a court function in knee breeches! And if Labour was ready to fall a victim to the magic of Monarchy, the older parties and the propertied classes

as a whole had good reason to encourage its deification. There could be no better antidote to the growing force of Socialism, and no better sentimental link of national and imperial unity. The constitutional bonds of Empire had been snapped; the Statute of Westminster, a masterpiece of deliberately vague phraseology, concocted by Mr. Balfour to avoid defining the relations between the Dominions and the mother country, made Canada, Australia, South Africa, and the Irish Free State equals with Great Britain. The only remaining constitutional link is joint loyalty to the King-Emperor, and the Prime Ministers of the Dominions stand in exactly the same constitutional relation to the King as the British Premier. They negotiate with Great Britain on important issues through the Foreign Office. The Dominions Office has become, as it has been said, merely a post office. No wonder that every effort has been made to popularize Monarchy in the Empire overseas; no wonder that Edward VIII spent much of his time as Prince of Wales in touring the Empire; no wonder that the chance of direct communication over the radio was seized upon, so that the King's own voice might be heard through the length and breadth of the Commonwealth.

IV

Public Opinion and the Abdication

"On ne Baldwine pas avec l'amour."—*Le Canard enchaîné.*

"Isn't it very dreadful that Edward VIII, son of our Beloved King George, should bring Hollywood ideals to Britain? Surely he could have found some sweet British Girl."—Letter in the *Daily Express.*

"May I suggest that if we are to believe the teachings of our Church, the All Highest did not think it beneath His dignity to take unto Himself 'a commoner' to wife, thereby giving us The Master—The King of Kings."
—Letter in the *Daily Mirror.*

"We all share the Archbishop's regret that Edward VIII insists on marrying the woman with whom he happened to fall in love."—Letter in the *Sunday Referee.*

"Primed with instructions from Russia—to get rid of the King—Mr. Baldwin has had a busy week—backwards and forwards—backwards and forwards—several times a day to hold a pistol to the head of the King, crying, 'Do my will—or—abdicate.' "—Lady Houston in the *Saturday Review.*

"In times of crisis the vast majority of folks turn for comfort and enlightenment to one of the following—Religion—Music—Poetry. Discarding the former two, may we not turn to poetry for much needed guidance? Have you thought of approaching the Poet Laureate? It seems to me that if inspiration came to him he could produce six or eight lines which would result in presenting to all concerned the real picture in its proper focus, with the proper settlement resulting."—Mr. A. E. Lawson, former Derbyshire cricket captain, in the *Sunday Dispatch.*

"Many thousands of you who applied for our Coronation Tea Set will be interested to know that we have now made arrangements to supply this tea set to you in three alternative forms. Firstly: with the picture of Edward VIII on the bread-and-butter plate, as originally announced. Secondly: with a picture of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the bread-and-butter plate. Thirdly: for those readers who would like to have the tea set and bread-and-butter plates bearing pictures of Edward VIII and King George VI and Queen Elizabeth we are prepared to supply the tea set and both bread-and-butter plates for an extra 6d., making your total remittance 5s., instead of 4s. 6d., as the amount to be sent with the completed Order Form."—The Editor, *Woman's Illustrated.*

"Serious-minded King George VI has many qualities to endear him to the people.

"He is a better boxer than was Edward VIII, plays a stronger game of tennis—though he is left-handed

with the racquet—enjoys grouse shooting, and has a mechanical bent."—*News Review.*

"We know no spectacle so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. In general, elopements, divorces, and family quarrels pass with little notice. We read the scandal, talk about it for a day, and forget it. But once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. We must make a stand against vice. We must teach libertines that the English people appreciate the importance of domestic ties. Accordingly, some unfortunate man, in no respect more depraved than hundreds whose offences have been treated with lenity, is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. If he has children, they are to be taken from him. If he has a profession, he is to be driven from it. He is cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. He is, in truth, a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised. We reflect very complacently on our own severity, and compare with great pride the high standard of morals established in England with the Parisian laxity. At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heartbroken. And our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more."—Macaulay's *Essay on Byron,* 1831.

THE STORY OF THE NINE DAYS DURING WHICH THE TABOO about British Monarchy was shattered falls into four periods.

In the first period, before Mr. Baldwin's statement that the King had asked for legislation to make a morganatic marriage possible, the press had to cope with an immense shock to self-complacency; the public had to be told that the Monarchy was not, after all, perfect, and several of the papers with the largest circulations were obviously flummoxed by the difficulty of knowing how their readers would take it. There was rich comedy in their efforts to have it all ways. How be loyal and moral at the same time? How appear to give a lead when they did not know in which direction popular sentiment would move? It is significant that they were constantly forced to reiterate that the King is "after all human." People had to be told that the King was not a god, because otherwise the situation was inexplicable.

In the second period, from Friday to Monday, wavering proprietors decided what attitude to adopt. In this, the critical period, a King's party seemed to be in process of formation.

In the third period it had become obvious that English puritanism, led by Mr. Baldwin, would be victorious. The project of a King's party was defeated; the question put before the country was whether the King would renounce Mrs. Simpson or abdicate.

In the final period the King's abdication was certain, and the organs of propaganda set about their task of building up King George VI as the natural successor of

his father. Edward VIII was to be a mere interlude, a brief departure from historical continuity.

During the week before the news actually broke, all Fleet Street was aware that the King's attachment to Mrs. Simpson could not much longer be concealed. On December 2 the Bishop of Bradford's reference to the King's failure to appreciate the value of God's grace was the signal for which all the newspapers had been waiting. Their material was ready; their leading articles were not. In strict privacy editors of great national newspapers wrote and discarded innumerable articles. The subject was too difficult; there was no good way of breaking the news, no sufficiently delicate and at the same time intelligible way of commenting until the public knew the facts. The *Times* rebuked those who suggested that the King's South Wales visit was undertaken rather against than in accordance with Ministerial wishes. It showed inside knowledge of the situation by beginning, even before the crisis, to "write up" the Duke and Duchess of York. Then came the Bishop of Bradford's statement. The daily papers, by unofficial agreement, reported the Bishop's statement in full, but without editorial comment. Some of the provincial papers, headed by the *Yorkshire Post*, seized upon the occasion to approve the Bishop's remarks and to comment severely on the evil effects of a scandal round the throne. After that the lid blew off.

Bishop Blunt followed up his statement by an explanation that he had intended no reference to the King and Mrs. Simpson and had merely meant that the King seldom went to church. I am inclined, on reflection, to believe that this explanation is strictly true. Many people also assumed that the *Yorkshire Post's* comments were inspired. The suggestion was natural, since the *Yorkshire Post* is closely in touch with the Government, one of its proprietors, indeed, being a relative of Mr. Eden. The *Yorkshire Post,* however, has emphatically denied any inspiration in the matter, and it is to be noted that a number of other provincial papers, including the *Manchester Guardian,* simultaneously decided to make Bishop Blunt's remark the occasion for breaking silence. On the next day, December 3, all the London papers carried the news (though in some cases very carefully wrapped up) that there was a struggle between the King and the Cabinet about Mrs. Simpson. In many newspaper offices there was great difficulty in deciding what editorial line to take. Immense political stakes turned on the issue; it might lead to the resignation of the Government or the abdication of the King. Few papers could be sure how the public would react. They had never before criticized the Monarchy; would their readers wish to support a popular King at all costs —even at the cost of his marriage with a woman who had been twice in the divorce courts? Caution seemed

to be indicated. The *Morning Post*, in a short leader, broke the news to loyal Conservatives by saying that it shrank from believing that the gossip could be true. The *Daily Herald* reflected the bewilderment of the Labour Party by having no leading article on the subject; it was content with having as its main feature article an exposition by Professor Laski of the constitutional question that would arise in the event of any conflict between the King and his Ministers. The *Daily Express* also avoided editorial comment, and so did some of Lord Rothermere's newspapers.

The *Daily Telegraph* and the *Times* were clearly with Mr. Baldwin from the outset. Throughout the entire period the *Telegraph* tactfully but steadily stood behind Mr. Baldwin, urging first that the King would surely choose right (implying that he would renounce his affections for his public duty), then warning its readers that there was a possibility that he might abdicate, and making it clear that, given the choice, it preferred abdication. The *Times* took exactly the same attitude. But it was far more explicit and obviously in close touch with Mr. Baldwin. Its leading article of December 3 explained that neither Bishop Blunt's remarks nor the American publicity could be any longer disregarded. The American newspapers had even gone to the length, in the last fortnight, of saying that the King contemplated a marriage that was "incompatible

with the throne, and of announcing Queen Mary's approval of it." The two paragraphs that followed had obviously been prepared in advance. They quoted Halifax the Trimmer and the *Times* of forty-five years ago to sustain an argument that kingship must be kept above public criticism, and that though "a king is entitled to his relaxation and the companionship of his chosen friends," the nation and Empire could not afford that the influence of the Monarchy should be weakened by a conflict "between private inclination and public duty." It demanded an act or statement which would put an end to the damaging campaign of scandal against the monarch, referred to their serious effects in Canada and other Dominions, and reminded us that "events in the world outside have imposed, as never before, upon the British Monarchy the duty to stand as a rock to the world outside amid the seething tides of Communism and Dictatorship. So it stood a year ago. So, let us hope, it will stand a year hence when a new reign has been hallowed by the coronation. But the public need some definite reassurance if the rock is not to be shaken."

The only daily paper which openly supported the King in his wish to marry Mrs. Simpson was the *News Chronicle*. Its leading article on December 3 was refreshingly frank and outspoken. It avoided the usual complimentary flummery and showed, as later devel-

opments proved, that it was unusually well informed about the actual situation. It urged that the King should not be prevented from marrying as he wished, even though the woman of his choice had been twice in the divorce courts and might not be considered a suitable queen. The solution, it suggested, was special legislation by which she might take titled rank and be the King's wife without being Queen of England. The same argument was elaborated next day in the *New Statesman and Nation,* which pointed out that the situation had arisen because of the most attractive characteristics of Edward VIII; his dislike of humbug prevented him making a formal marriage to a royal personage whom he did not love, though a farce of this character would have been welcomed by the Cabinet and solemnized by the Church.

On December 4 the issue became clearer. Mr. Baldwin's statement in the afternoon that the King had expressed a desire for special legislation which would enable him to make a morganatic marriage with Mrs. Simpson was anticipated by the Parliamentary correspondent of the *Times.* He explained that the Ministers had done nothing to interfere with the King's private business. The suggestion had come before them at the Cabinet meeting on November 27; the interval had been occupied in sounding the opinion of Mr. Baldwin's colleagues and supporters, of the Opposition leaders, and

of the Dominion governments; there had been no substantial differences of opinion shown in any of these quarters; Wednesday's Cabinet meeting had therefore been quickly over, and the Cabinet's answer to His Majesty conveyed immediately afterwards. The anxiety of the *Times* that no constitutional issue should arise and that the King should be met by a united House of Commons was shown by its high praise of the *Daily Herald's* attitude (this must have referred to Professor Laski's article). It pointed out, however, that though Mr. Attlee and Sir Archibald Sinclair had been consulted by the Prime Minister, neither section of the Opposition was "as yet definitely committed to any policy which the Government may find it necessary to adopt." What was clear, however, was that Colonel Wedgwood's motion, in effect supporting the marriage and declaring that the Oath of Allegiance to the King is "unaffected by any form of coronation ceremony or by the presence thereat or absence therefrom of any dignitary or personage whatsoever," was an independent view not generally shared by the Labour Party. In its leading article the *Times* urged that no one had any objection to any marriage with a commoner, or an American, and it then went on to attack the suggestion of special legislation which would prevent the King's wife from becoming queen. It argued, in effect, that if Mrs. Simpson was not suitable as queen, then she was

equally unsuitable as the wife of the King. Its final paragraph was devoted to urging the dangers of delay.

The attitude of the *Morning Post* now became clear. It demanded in decorous terms that the King should renounce his love for the sake of his duty. It also carried, however, a special article suggesting that Mrs. Simpson might have descended from a Knight who came into England with the Conqueror. The *Daily Herald* urged the Prime Minister to make a full statement of the facts, said that Labour would like a commoner as queen, but that the real issue was the overriding necessity for the King to accept the advice of his Ministers. On the other side a number of influential papers began to stand in favour of the King having his own way. The *Daily Express*, owned by a personal friend of the King, contented itself editorially with saying: "Let the King give his decision to the people." The *Daily Mail* said that abdication was out of the question, that the King would come out of the struggle stronger than ever, and praised the attitude of Colonel Wedgwood. The *Daily Mirror* took the same line, urging that Mr. Churchill's demand that no "irrevocable step" should be taken without the House of Commons and Colonel Wedgwood's motion were indications that the issue might be decided by the representatives of the people, reminded us that the King was a man, and thought that the general public would support the King. The *News Chronicle*

hoped that no advice had been given which would leave the King the blunt choice between renunciation and abdication. Why not a morganatic marriage? The *Daily Worker* carried a full report of a speech by Mr. Harry Pollitt which spoke of the "flummery and flapdoodle" behind the constitutional crisis, and urged that the real issue was the desire of Mr. Baldwin and the capitalist machine to coerce the King into doing his job of perpetuating the existing economic order.

On Saturday, December 5, the *Times* reported the Cabinet's refusal of a morganatic marriage, again praised the *Daily Herald* for agreeing that the Cabinet could have taken no other course than to tender the advice it did, and urged that this was "no crisis precipitated by a Government of Mrs. Grundys or snobs," but that its attitude was supported by the Dominions, Parliament, and the public; it said that great damage had already been done to the throne, and that an early decision was essential. The *Morning Post* thought it "deeply repugnant" that an attempt should be made to arrange a marriage between the King and a woman who had not yet obtained her freedom. The King's choice lay between "self-will and self-sacrifice." The *Daily Telegraph* noted the constitutional dangers that would arise if the King persisted in his desire for a morganatic marriage, and feared the possibility of a King's party such as had not appeared for a hundred and fifty years.

The *Manchester Guardian* showed a Puritan background from which it has never departed, and a caution which it has occasionally abandoned and has made itself famous in the past by abandoning at the right minute. On this occasion it took the same line as the *Times,* but was less outspoken. Its London letter of December 5, however, added a new point which was to become extremely important in the following week. It pointed out in guarded language that the King had got rid of the older and responsible advisers of the Crown and was now surrounded by people of his own age who were not necessarily his truest friends. The *Daily Express* came out more openly on what was becoming known as the King's side. Mr. Baldwin's refusal to agree to a morganatic solution was a "direct challenge to the King," which had made the crisis worse. The Government did not represent the country; the crisis could be averted by the Cabinet giving way. The inclusion of a special article about the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested that those who sided with the King realized the part played by the Church in the dispute, and might be prepared to fight the issue on theory of "puritanism versus freedom." The *Daily Mail* was also hostile to Mr. Baldwin, urged that the country was not yet informed precisely of what the King had in mind, and that an intermediate decision was still

possible. The *Daily Mirror* took the same line more strongly. Huge headlines demanded full knowledge of the King's proposition; Mr. Baldwin was hiding behind the Dominions; abdication must be avoided. It threatened that a General Election would follow abdication. The country would support the King, who would make his own choice. The *News Chronicle* still wanted to know why the morganatic marriage was impossible, and printed a forcible letter from Dr. Maude Royden urging that none of the immoral Kings of the past had been asked to abdicate, and that it was odd that when a King did challenge bad moral standards and wanted honourably to marry the woman he loved he should not be allowed to do so.

By the week-end it was clear that the growth of a "King's party" was a real danger. The elements which supported the King's marriage were the Rothermere and Beaverbrook press; a group of Conservative M.P.'s whose attitude was expressed by Mr. Churchill in a statement urging that the King must not be hurried, and implicitly attacking the Government for forcing him into a position which might lead to abdication; a few Socialists like Sir Stafford Cripps and Communists like Mr. Harry Pollitt; intellectuals and nationalists who saw the issue primarily as a fight against Puritanism and Clericalism; Lady Houston, who declared that Mr.

Baldwin had acted on instructions from Russia; [1] and Sir Oswald Mosley, who bitterly attacked the Government for trying to get rid of the King. On the Friday night Sir Oswald addressed a large meeting in Bethnal Green in which he asserted the King's right to marry whom he wished, and bitterly attacked the politicians for their monstrous impertinence in attempting to dictate the King's private life. On the next day the British Union of Fascists published a special paper (which carried no date) entitled *Crisis*. Of the four pages the two inside pages were devoted to Sir Oswald's speech and to photographs of the meeting, while the front page showed the King against a background of derelict pits and docks in South Wales. On the back page Mr. John Beckett, once a Labour M.P., wrote an ex-service men's plea for fair play for their King and war comrade, while Mr. William Joyce declared that the politicians had no constitutional right, let alone a moral one, to interfere with the King's marriage. One other group rallied to the King's side. According to the philosophy of the Social Credit Reformers, Parliament, the Cabinet, the press, and indeed, all existing institutions are in our present society controlled by the banks and inter-

[1] It was later revealed in the *New Statesman and Nation*, January 9, 1937, that during the crisis Lady Houston had written to Queen Mary suggesting that the Queen should go to Cannes and fetch Mrs. Simpson to stay with her in Marlborough House. With characteristic generosity she added that she would pay all expenses both ways!

national financiers. Against this modern form of rule by the robber barons, the King might again assume his sixteenth-century role of popular champion against irresponsible interests. This thesis has been developed at length by Dr. McNair Wilson, and for nearly a generation it has been a central part of Mr. Hilaire Belloc's propaganda for a restoration of Monarchial Catholicism and present proprietorship. It was not surprising, therefore, that the followers of Major Douglas should produce on December 5 a special edition of their paper, *Social Credit,* in which they declared that the truth about the situation was that the King had shown a degree of sympathy with the distressed areas that had angered the money power, and that if the King refused to be bullied he could break the Government and take the first step towards smashing the financial interests that ruled us. It also announced that "the Social Credit Secretariat, Ltd., on Thursday sent the following telegram to the King's private secretary at Fort Belvedere: 'ISSUE RECOGNIZED AS THE KING VERSUS OLIGARCHY. WORLD-WIDE SUPPORT ASSURED HIS MAJESTY.' " The next issue of *Social Credit* (December 11) suffered from the mischance that it appeared on the day after the King's abdication. Its leading article was headed: "SEND HIM VICTORIOUS." It declared that the crisis was only just beginning, that the first round had gone to the King, that it was more than a conflict between the

King and the banker Cabinet. "It is a conflict, enacted before us at the moment as on a stage, between the philosophy of Social Credit and that of International Finance Credit. Only for the moment; in the twinkling of an eye we shall be in it."

A similar attitude was taken up by certain Catholic papers. The *Catholic Times* declared (December 11) that the whole crisis was a ramp against the King, and that financiers were using a moral issue to force an artificial crisis. As a Catholic paper it was not able to condone or recognize remarriage, and it therefore insisted that no such person as Mrs. Simpson could exist. It insisted on giving her the name that she had taken in her first marriage—Mrs. Spencer—and gave the impression of looking, like Henry VIII, for a way of proving that this first marriage had not in fact ever been, in the sight of God, a marriage at all. The paper declared: "We are for the King. We are against the financial and political powers which are forcing King Edward from the throne." It demanded the re-establishment of the Monarchy as an active force in the government of the country. Much more significant was the Catholic *Tablet*, which, referring to the possibility of the King renouncing Mrs. Simpson, said: "If the King makes the sacrifice now asked of him, he is entitled to expect in return more recognition than is now extended to his right to an initiative in the government of the

country." Referring to this suggestion the *Church Times* (December 11) rightly called it fantastic, and added: "Here is one more striking example of the growing Roman Catholic opposition to democracy."

All possible points of view were expressed in the Sunday press on December 6. In the *Observer* Mr. Garvin opposed the morganatic solution and ended a lengthy sermon to the King with the hope that God would be his guide, and that the King must choose which was his duty in his inmost conscience. The *Sunday Times* urged that Mrs. Simpson could be neither queen nor King's wife, that he must decide between marriage and the crown, that delay was dangerous. It summarized the dangers in a remarkable sentence:

> "This great cynosure institution, round which as their sole remaining formal centre the shining constellations of the British Commonwealth revolve, cannot itself be grounded on a peradventure."

"Scrutator" ended a more temperately expressed article with the hope that the King would "realize himself, but in the ways of constitutional kingship, in which conflict between personal feeling and royal duty can only be resolved in one way." On the other side, the *Sunday Dispatch* thought a morganatic solution better than abdication, while the attitude of the *Sunday Express* was

summarized by its headline: "Hurrying the King." The *Sunday Pictorial* said that King Edward might broadcast within the next forty-eight hours, that he must not abdicate, and that there ought to be a solution for a simple problem set by facts that "the King wanted Mrs. Simpson and we wanted the King." *Reynolds's* carried an unusual article by Mr. Brailsford, who pointed out that "While England chatters about a lady from Baltimore, Germany marches forward to the conquest of Spain."

The press on Monday and Tuesday, the 7th and 8th, betrayed the extreme anxiety in official quarters that the King might delay his decision while, with or without his consent, a royalist party might gather round his supporters. On Monday the *Times* devoted its editorial to an account of the attitude of the Dominions, and to defending both their Governments and the British Government against the charge of trying to hurry the King. It urged that no constitutional issue had arisen or could arise. The *Morning Post* continued to urge that the King's decision might be hard, but that it was nevertheless simple, and it printed a remarkable selection from its correspondence during the next few days showing how strongly opinion was divided among avowed Conservatives, some of whom greeted its attitude with the warmest applause, while others described its request for the King to sacrifice himself as all "lies and cant."

Another reader said that the editor deserved "kicking from Tudor Street to Buckingham Palace." This violent division of opinion among people who wear the old-school tie was one of the most interesting features of the whole dispute. One correspondent said that "words failed him" to characterize the Bishop of Bradford, and that it was an issue between old and young. Others supported the Church and the *Morning Post* in wishing at all costs to keep the throne free from any immoral taint. The *Daily Telegraph* replied to Mr. Churchill, urging the grave dangers to the Monarchy and Empire if decision was postponed, and expressing its confidence in the King's sense of duty. The *Daily Herald* now completely supported Mr. Baldwin. There had been no compulsion and no hurry. It laughed at the novel alliance between Sir Oswald Mosley and Mr. Harry Pollitt. Professor Laski explained the whole constitutional position, again urging that the issue was the supremacy of Parliament. On the other side the *Daily Express* featured pictures of a crowd cheering for the King in Whitehall, supported Mr. Churchill's plea for time, said that no one knew what Empire opinion was, that in any case the King could not marry immediately, and that the people were behind him. The *Daily Mail* was remarkable for a letter from Lord Rothermere, its owner, urging that we could not afford to lose the King, replying to the Bishop of Bradford by

recalling that the King had been a good friend of religion in supporting Toc H.[1] Lord Rothermere managed, as usual, to introduce Russia into the argument, and said that the King was the only agency powerful enough to obviate the necessity of introducing conscription. These remarkable arguments were repeated in two divergent letters that appeared in successive editions in Lord Rothermere's own evening paper. Lord Rothermere's acrobatics had the unusual result of eliciting a special editorial in the *Times*, which castigated him in terms of bitter satire for wishing to drag the Monarchy into politics and confusing every issue. The *Times* also attacked the *Evening Standard* and the *News Chronicle*, whose issue of Monday the 7th had supported Mr. Churchill, who had been to Fort Belvedere on Friday and who might be entrusted, the *News Chronicle* suggested, to state a case for the King which he was constitutionally unable to state for himself. The *Times* somewhat overstrained itself in urging that no compulsion of any sort had been put on the King.

I have now reached the turning-point in the history of these nine days. When Mr. Churchill rose on Monday to repeat his request that no "irrevocable decision" (which apparently meant abdication) should be made without Parliament, he was received with a chorus of

[1] An interdenominational Christian society for social service and fellowship, with branches throughout the British Empire.

disapprobation which obviously startled him, while Mr. Baldwin was received with loud cheers. The full summary of the reasons for this change was given by "Critic" in the *New Statesman and Nation* on Friday, December 12. He wrote:

> "At the beginning Members were stunned. The pretended secret was public property, but the Government said nothing. An experienced lobby correspondent, whose business it is to ascertain the views of Members, estimates that about two-thirds of the House were behind the Government from the outset, while the remaining third was made up in almost equal proportions of the undecided and the very decided; that is to say, of the Members who thought that there was no difficulty about the marriage and those who didn't like it, but were not prepared to risk either abdication or a conflict with the King over it. The minority, scattered over all parts of the House, seemed likely to rally behind Colonel Wedgwood's pro-marriage resolution. This motion appealed to those Members, mostly of the Left, who hated the idea of an ecclesiastical veto on the marriage, and it appealed also to those members, chiefly Conservatives, who were for the King any way, if necessary with Mrs. Simpson, and who may, some of them, have entertained the idea that this might be a good chance of getting Churchill in and Baldwin out. My lobby friend's

view is that for about forty-eight hours there was a real danger of a deadly division of Parliament and the growth of a King's party; this danger reached its height on Friday, when Mr. Baldwin somewhat brusquely announced that the Cabinet would have nothing to do with a morganatic marriage. The minority then surged out of the Chamber threatening war, real war, on Baldwin. By Monday all this had changed. Practically the whole House was behind Mr. Baldwin, and when Mr. Churchill again asked his delaying question, he was practically shouted down.

"I think there were two reasons for this change. The reports from the constituencies showed that support for the King's marriage was practically only vocal in London. Scotland was solidly against, South Wales Members reported that the King's popularity was almost gone, and that audiences in the cinemas saw in cold silence the films of his recent visit to the valleys where they had all cheered themselves hoarse. Lancashire and Yorkshire Members said the counties were solid against the marriage, and even indifferent whether the King abdicated or not. Similar reports came from all parts of the country. The second and perhaps more important reason for the change was the realization over the week-end of the danger of the formation of a King's party. Mr. Churchill had visited the King on Friday, when it was believed

that he was about to abdicate, and rumour said that his visit was responsible for the prolongation of the crisis. Every one was against delay, some people fearing that Hitler, who for the first time for many months had stayed in Berlin over the week-end to watch events, would think the moment good for adventure as the Germans did in 1914 when England was involved in the Ulster crisis. Then there were strong trade reasons against delay, and the impossible thought of a General Election fought on so confused and damaging an issue. Moreover, Mr. Churchill was unlucky enough to receive the support over the week-end of Lord Rothermere and Sir Oswald Mosley, not to mention the fact that the Communists were also keen to cash in on the King. Mr. Churchill himself was obviously quite ignorant of the change that had taken place between Monday and Friday, and was startled by the almost ferocious resentment when he rose to put his question."

To this account I will add two points. First that there seems to have been a marked difference between London and provincial opinion, and secondly that in London, at any rate, the upper classes were rather less tolerant of King Edward than the working class. Propertied people seem generally to have thought that the King had "let them down." Labour speakers who were addressing meetings in the provinces over the week-end

reported that working-class opinion in Wales and Scotland and in the north of England was far more puritanical than in London, and in general vehemently opposed to the marriage. The provincial press was, on the whole, strongly averse to the marriage, and London is apt to forget how strong an influence local papers still exert on provincial opinion.

I was amused by a fox-hunting squire who was in process of divorcing his wife, and whose comment was that the King was "no gentleman." The poor, at least in some parts of London, were more tolerant. I asked bus conductors, charwomen, and working men, and nearly always, in the early period of the crisis at any rate, got the same response. First they said that the King ought to be able to marry anyone he wanted to, like anyone else. A friend whose work brought her into contact with a large number of poor people told me that the common opinion was summarized in a working woman's phrase: "He is a naughty boy, but we don't want to lose him." Another woman said: "Of course he had better marry her. It's no use living alongside of someone you don't like. You only want to do them in." In general the young were more lenient to the King than the elderly or middle-aged; indeed, I think the age distinction was more marked than that of class or district. On the Thursday morning, when it was clear that the King would abdicate, one heard regret, though

one occasionally met people, poor as well as rich, who abused King Edward for "deserting his post." As the result of reflection and of the press comments, most people of all classes had become reconciled to abdication as the only possible course. The final judgment was that of a taxi-driver in Whitehall when the news of the abdication was announced. He said regretfully, but sympathetically: "It wouldn't have done; it wouldn't have done."

These impressions are confirmed in the replies I have received from a number of Members of Parliament to whom I wrote asking for an account of the opinions expressed to them from their constituencies. One Liberal M.P. quotes a letter from a farmer, who said: "I am passionately devoted to the King. I think he's the best man we've ever had. I'd do *anything* for him. But—I've got a young family of children growing up, and if we have this woman as Queen, what am I to say to them?" A Conservative M.P. summarizes his experience as follows:

> "While I was in the North I found opinion remarkably solid, against the King's proposed marriage, in favour of the line taken by the Prime Minister, and willing, in the last terrible contingency, to face the abdication of the King and his replacement by the then Duke of York. People were bitter, disappointed, and dejected. At a social

gathering of a Conservative association I sketched out the two sides of the problem as fairly as I could, and then said: 'Many men in all strata of life have been obliged, from time to time, to renounce their immediate inclinations, and I could wish today to see another supreme act of unselfishness, a kingly act of renunciation.' This remarkable effort of oratory was hailed with applause (a very rare phenomenon in a northern Conservative audience). It was clear to me that I was merely interpreting their feelings. Perhaps inarticulately the problem was present in their minds roughly in the form: 'Surrender or abdication.'

"I addressed seven meetings in the country during the period of suspense, I never burked mentioning the crisis, and I noticed a unity comparable with the solidity of the North. In the North it was only a few among what they are pleased to call the 'young end,' who took the sloppy view about romance. And among the young men and young women I noticed some of the strongest antagonism to Mrs. Ernest Simpson. The whole experience illustrated to me the quiet liveliness of democracy."

It was clear from Tuesday onwards that the morganatic solution was dead. The old taboos were broken down. The *Times,* for instance, said that the idea of the morganatic marriage had been "raised by

the King himself," and then called it "this foolish and deplorable product of misguided ingenuity." Its support of Mr. Baldwin was fully echoed in the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *Daily Herald*, which said, on the 8th, that the country was moving towards complete unity against the marriage, and that it was sheer lunacy to suggest that Labour should try to seize the opportunity for Party purposes. This attitude was violently criticized in the *Daily Worker*, which said that the Labour Party had lined up behind Mr. Baldwin, and that the House of Commons, and more especially the Communist M.P., Mr. Gallacher, had been completely muzzled. The *Daily Mail* was content to reiterate that every possibility must be exhausted before there could be any thought of allowing the King to abdicate, while papers which had hitherto supported or not repudiated the morganatic solution eagerly jumped at a new way of escape which seemed to present itself. A message was reported to have come from Mrs. Simpson saying that her position was "unhappy and untenable," and that she wished to do nothing to damage the King or to make his position more difficult. The *News Chronicle* hoped that this would make the path of renunciation easy for the King, while the *Daily Express* and the *Evening Standard* of December 8 went so far as to say that the crisis was now completely over. The *Daily Mirror* also

thought that Mrs. Simpson's statement cleared the air, and began to edge in Mr. Baldwin's direction. It dealt with the strain on the Prime Minister and accepted his statement that no pressure had been put on the King. At the same time it continued to feature Mrs. Simpson in a favourable light (reminding that Mark Antony gave up a throne for Cleopatra) and concealed its change of position by quoting a number of extracts from the daily press which were critical of the King's proposal to marry Mrs. Simpson under a large heading: "Is this loyalty?" A selection from its correspondence suggested the existence of a large number of readers whose loyalty was vehement rather than forceful. The following is perhaps worth quotation:

> "The Germans think God sent them Hitler. Let every English man and woman think God sent us Mrs. Simpson. What qualifications has the Bishop of Bradford, Mr. Baldwin, and Sir John Simon to choose a partner for the King's bedchamber? I say Heil, Simpson of U.S.A., Empress of Britain, and Good Luck, your Majesty."

It is unnecessary to follow the papers in detail after this point, because the 9th of December was a "day of suspense" in which there was little definite comment, some papers believing the King would renounce his

marriage, others merely reiterating the need for haste. On the 10th, abdication was generally expected, and most of the papers that had been most vehemently on the King's side prepared the way for a calm acceptance of the inevitable. The announcement came on Thursday afternoon, accompanied by Mr. Baldwin's amazingly adroit speech. Those who listened attentively might have noticed certain ambiguities and omissions. Whereas the implications of Mr. Baldwin's earlier pronouncement had been that the King had not himself been in favour of Mrs. Simpson as queen, it now became clear that his suggestion of a morganatic marriage was a second best, advanced because he was aware that he could not carry it through against the inexorable opposition of Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop. Moreover, the *Times* leader the next day with its strong remark about the pleasure-seeking and "exotic" people who had surrounded the King was another indication that there were important persons who preferred King Edward's abdication, possibly with good reason, on the ground that he had included among his friends and advisers several who were regarded as politically and morally dangerous. This point was rubbed in with great emphasis by Mr. Gallacher, the Communist M.P., in the short debate that followed the abdication announcement. Mr. Gallacher

went, indeed, further and suggested that the friends of the King included people who were in effect agents of a foreign power.

It did not need any unusual information or more than average amount of critical intelligence to realize that Mr. Baldwin had used the morganatic project as a means of getting out of a very difficult situation. In effect, the King had been compelled to abdicate or completely to renounce association with Mrs. Simpson. If this had been clearly realized at the week-end it might have been fully and dangerously exploited by anti-democratic forces in England.

Mr. Baldwin's speech of Friday perfectly set the note of the next day's press. The papers which had been prepared during the past few days for a possible decision in favour of renunciation by the King and which on Wednesday night had rushed through arrangements in case of decision to set up a Council of Regency and make the Duke of York's daughter, Elizabeth, queen, were also ready for the Duke of York's accession. There he was with his wife and daughters, the perfect family man ready to be built up as the son of his impeccable father, George V. There was not very much that could be said about the new King; his stammer was indeed mentioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and by one paper, which told of his great efforts to overcome the defect, but stress was naturally

laid on his work for boys' camps, on his remarks about the need of social betterment, and about his happy and blameless family life. The only discordant note came from the small Left Socialist group in the House, who polled five votes for a republican amendment. Mr. Maxton urged eloquently but unoffensively that Monarchy was an out-of-date institution which naturally led to such crises in these days, and he was supported by Mr. Buchanan, Dr. Salter, Mr. Campbell Stephen, and Mr. Gallacher. But perhaps the most pertinent remark was made by Mr. Buchanan on the previous day, when, amid the eulogies of the departing King, he said he had never heard so much humbug in all his life, and if the speakers really believed all the things they were saying about him, "why did they unload him?" The Labour Party attitude, however, was expressed by Mr. Attlee, who said that Socialists could not waste their time on an abstract discussion about republicanism, although they did hold that Monarchy had been absurdly played up in the past and had been invested "with an unreal halo" which had "tended to obscure the realities of the position."

If matters could have remained there, Mr. Baldwin would have pulled off a perfect job—a job as difficult and as successfully handled from his point of view as the General Strike. For complete success, however, he should have had the last word. His speech was a mas-

terpiece of phraseology; the tone was perfect; trivial details about the exact times, even of phone calls to the King's secretary, were exactly designed to convey the atmosphere of complete frankness which was desirable, while successfully covering the omission of essentials. But the last word was not with Mr. Baldwin. On Friday evening, some hours after his abdication had taken effect, Mr. Edward Windsor broadcast from Windsor Castle. The contrast to the sensitive listener was a fitting close to the drama. For Prince Edward spoke with a different kind of emotion from Mr. Baldwin's, and with a simplicity and directness which were absolutely genuine. No one can exactly define the nature of the King's internal conflict during the week of suspense. It was generally thought that he was trying to make up his mind whether he would renounce the woman he wished to marry or abdicate the throne. This, I am convinced, is an erroneous view. The King had absolutely decided to marry Mrs. Simpson and never wavered from that decision between the time he first informed Mr. Baldwin of his intention and his abdication. The question was not between renunciation and abdication, but between abdication and fighting in any way constitutionally open to him against the Ministers who were determined to prevent his marriage. It is noticeable that he began his broadcast speech by saying that "at long last" he was able to

speak for himself, and it is no very well-guarded secret that he would have liked to speak for himself on the radio at an earlier stage.[1] If he had not put up the morganatic project to the Cabinet he might simply have announced his decision to make Mrs. Simpson queen by marrying her without obtaining the permission of the Cabinet, thus appealing for public support, not against the Government, but simply on his own behalf. After the question had become a matter of public controversy and the Cabinet had announced their refusal to legislate for a morganatic marriage, a public statement of any sort by the King himself would have brought him into party politics and involved a constitutional crisis. How much the Constitution owes to King Edward's behaviour has not yet, I think, been fully realized, nor have the mass of the people understood that the King could quite easily, as Mr. Baldwin himself explained, have said nothing about his intention to marry Mrs. Simpson until after her decree had become absolute and he himself had become crowned. Knowing, however, that this marriage would in any case be unpopular with important sections of the community, he appears to have thought it more honourable to have the issue set out and publicly discussed before his Coronation. The simplicity of his words in

[1] The phonograph record of King Edward's final broadcast, which has had an immense sale in the United States, has been kept off the market by the British Broadcasting Corporation in England.

his final broadcast were again as marked as they had been in the document of abdication that was read by Mr. Speaker in the House of Commons. While Mr. Baldwin made much of his friendship with King Edward, and of how it had grown in intimacy during their long discussions, King Edward said exactly what he meant and no more—that his "Ministers, especially Mr. Baldwin, had shown him full consideration." It may well be that if the King had earlier simply informed the public that he could not carry out his duties happily or successfully without the woman he loved and asked for public approval as the alternative to abdication, the opposition to his marriage with Mrs. Simpson could have been overcome both in England and in the Dominions. But no such direct question was ever put to the public, nor, indeed, is it easy to see how it could have been without raising the whole constitutional issue. Puritanism was therefore once again almost accidentally associated with Parliamentarism.

At the week-end people were more or less consciously preparing to be Cavaliers or Roundheads, and if the battle had ever been joined, it would have been complicated by the fact that in these days many of the political loyalists who might have been Cavaliers were Puritans, while many of the strongest constitutional Roundheads detested what they regarded as an immoral and out-of-date Puritanism and objected

strongly to the part played in the background by organized religion. As it proved, the King went across the water without leaving a Cavalier Party behind him, and the victory went by default to the Parliamentarians and the Puritans.

V

The Coronation—Magic or Common Sense?

IT SHOULD NOW BE POSSIBLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS asked by my American friend in the letter that I quoted at the beginning of this book. What has happened to the Monarchy? Why, fundamentally, did King Edward abdicate? What is the significance of the Coronation of George VI?

I believe, in spite of appearances, that George VI begins his reign under happier auspices than Edward VIII, and that King Edward did the Monarchy a good turn. For the British had lost their heads about the Crown; they were abandoning reason and common sense for hysteria and magic. It seems odd that a King should have had to abdicate to prove that he was human, but that was the penalty of deifying his father. Today the press, the platform, and the pulpit are again hard at work to try to build up the new King into a god. But I do not think they will succeed easily, and I am sure that the attempt is a poor service to the King and to Britain. Kings are conscious of their own humanity and frailty; they may even, like Edward VIII, resent

humbug and wish for a little reticence and the recognition of their right to some decent privacy in their spare time. They know that the Coronation is a popular ceremony in which the monarch promises to fulfil the functions of his office, and the public, in return, recognizes him as the first official of the State and ceremonial head of the Commonwealth. This is enough. I am sure that George VI does not want any bishop to say that the peculiar ritual of the Coronation confers supernatural benefits upon him, and I do not believe that he feels himself to "incarnate the community." We are all less likely to spoil a happy ceremony with humbug because we saw in the case of Edward VIII what is likely to happen when we forget our traditional common sense and start deifying human beings.

As we survey the story of Edward's abdication, we see that it was the surprising result of a combination of circumstances. It is not true, to mention a few commonly held fallacies, that Edward abdicated because he did not want to be King, or that he was "pushed off" the throne by Mr. Baldwin or the Archbishop because he was "modern," "pro-Fascist," "socialistic," or regarded by bankers as dangerous. But there is an element of truth in all of these generalizations. King Edward did not want to leave the throne, but it is true that he was impatient of its obligations and had made up his mind that in a choice between Mrs. Simpson and the

Crown, he preferred what he hoped would be a happy marriage to what he was sure would be, without Mrs. Simpson, an unhappy reign. This is not to say that he abdicated willingly. It was often said that as Prince of Wales he did not wish to ascend the throne. But it is one thing not to wish to wear a crown, and another thing to give it up. Similarly, when we consider the parts played by Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop of Canterbury, we may be sure that neither aspired to the position of king-maker, but that both of them were sure to what conclusion they intended to steer the crisis from the moment that the King stated his unalterable intention to marry Mrs. Simpson. It is clear that Mr. Baldwin, during his long rest in the summer, was preparing himself for what he knew would be a very difficult crisis, which had to end, in his view, in abdication or in renunciation. To say that the dignitaries of the Church hold the same view is not to endorse Mr. Ivor Brown's comment that the King was the victim of an "Episcopal *Putsch*," that he was "bumped off with a Blunt instrument." [1] The Archbishop and other ecclesiastical dig-

[1] Letter in *New Statesman and Nation*, December 19, 1936. The Archbishop's broadcast led to a most remarkable outburst of anticlerical feeling not only in the weekly reviews (*vide* especially the correspondence in *Time and Tide* and the *New Statesman and Nation*) but also in papers like the *Daily Telegraph*. The resentment against the Archbishop was not confined to "intellectuals." The tone of the broadcast was felt to be that of a leader of a party who boasts of having beaten his opponent—never a popular attitude in Britain.

nitaries undoubtedly feared the effects of a marriage between the King and a woman who had appeared in divorce suits. How, if such a marriage had been permitted, could they have maintained, as they apparently believe it is their duty to do, the illogicalities and indecencies of a law which condemns to legal union people who are not united by ties of love? Clearly the King's desire to marry Mrs. Simpson, and his whole attitude to conventional religion, threatened established orthodoxy, and the weight of the Church was therefore against the King. But it must be added that the majority of the British people, whether taking the Church's view of divorce or not, seem to have agreed with Mr. Baldwin and the Archbishop that Mrs. Simpson was not a suitable wife for the King, and that the reason for this view was her former marriages. Opinion in the Dominions was never properly tested, and Mr. Baldwin's view that Mrs. Simpson could never have been put over in the Empire cannot be proved. Mr. Baldwin seems to have found Mr. Mackenzie King a valuable ally. But I do not doubt that Mr. Baldwin was right in thinking that it would have been very difficult to satisfy the Dominions that Mrs. Simpson was a suitable match for King Edward. They are even more conventional than England.

As for the political objections, they would never have been heard of apart from the divorces. The *Times* and

the Archbishop supported their case by talking of the King's "exotic" and irresponsible friends, and stories of cocktail glasses (now the recognized symbol of impropriety) standing on secret plans for battleships at Fort Belvedere certainly played their part in disillusioning a number of people who might otherwise have supported the marriage. Incidentally, they appear to justify Sir Stafford Cripps, who has been so vehemently abused for speaking of the political dangers of the circles that surround the Monarchy. Equally important were the stories of the pro-Nazi sympathies of the King's friends and even of the King himself. In view of the extraordinary efforts made by Nazi propagandists to penetrate society, I think the Labour Party was right in paying attention to the presence of prominent Nazi spokesmen at dinner parties attended by the King or his immediate entourage. As for the alleged pro-Nazi sympathies of King Edward himself, there is no evidence, as far as I know, that he held any other than the common British view that Germany had been badly treated at Versailles, and that it was desirable in the interests of peace to cultivate friendship between the British and German ex-soldiers. It has always been the British way to forgive old opponents, especially if we have wronged them; we find it correspondingly difficult to get on with those who have been our allies and to whom we owe obligations. Hence the dangerous ease

with which Nazi propaganda makes its way in Britain and the unnecessary friction that arises in our dealings with France and the United States.

There remains the final accusation that King Edward was forced to abdicate because he was too sympathetic with the unemployed in South Wales and too insistent that the Government should adopt productive measures that it had steadily refused to adopt. Once again there is a fragment of truth, but only a fragment in this simple picture of a complex situation. Big business regards the Monarchy as a focus of national loyalty which should serve to blunt the edge of criticism in times of depression or open class conflict. It was enough to talk to business men about the divergence of economic theory between Mr. Neville Chamberlain and the King, who gave his word to South Wales that "something would be done," to realize that industrialists were uneasy about the effect of the King's supposedly Socialist leanings. Others, of course, saw in the King's social activities the best safeguard against real Socialism, but there was enough doubt to make the business world less horror-struck at the suggestion of the King's abdication than it would otherwise have been. In short, while it is ludicrous to talk about the King's removal by a "bankers' government," it is true that the Simpson affair was merely the decisive factor which made those in authority feel that British economic and political

institutions would be safer with a more conventional and manageable King.

In this remarkable combination of circumstances, the British press, radio, public, Premier, and House of Commons, all behaved precisely according to pattern. On the night of King Edward's broadcast I heard the announcer declare that the world stood amazed at the admirable behaviour of England in this unprecedented crisis. The phrase recalled the whole familiar tune. During the next few days it was repeated in one form or another in almost every British newspaper. Britain had behaved as always with astonishing sobriety, judgment, self-restraint. Foreigners, it was implied, would have kicked over the traces in all sorts of unthinkable ways at the prospect of a royal abdication or a royal marriage with a woman who had appeared twice in the divorce courts.

This self-congratulation on their own modesty, reticence, and other sterling gifts always marks British recovery from a shock. The crisis is resolved and the process of self-reassurance begins. The same pattern of behaviour was noticeable in the General Strike, in the economic crisis of 1931, even in so comparatively small a matter as the Budget scandal. In all these cases one of those things which the British ruling classes would not admit to be possible in their country had indubitably occurred. It is an axiom resolutely upheld,

and only to be disputed by the contumacious, that, while other people have social divisions and revolutions, no class struggle exists in England. The General Strike nevertheless occurred. Similarly, bad finance and unsound economic policy might upset the economic stability of Continental countries or of the United States; in England the banks were invulnerable and capitalism unshakable. Yet the economic crisis of 1931 occurred. Again, graft may be rampant abroad, but its absence is the peculiar glory of British public life. Yet the Budget leakage occurred. In each of these cases exactly the same technique was adopted. When the unprecedented had happened and could no longer be hidden, every effort was made to insist that it was an isolated incident having nothing to do with anything else in society, a mere aberration from the normal to which we could at once return when the incident was over. No reason to examine its causes or to consider whether the moral and social axioms that had been momentarily challenged were in need of revision. No reason to blame anybody or to dwell on the past. In each of these cases it was left to Mr. Baldwin to say the healing word. It was most needed in the abdication crisis. The first effect of discovery was stunning; for a few days the confused public was like a man who had received a violent blow on the head and who feared in his pain and bewilderment that the injury might be

permanent, only to wake up a few days later in hospital to find Mr. Baldwin sitting by the bedside explaining that nothing very serious had really occurred, that the Monarchy was safer than ever, and that it was a proof of Constitutional soundness that Britain was able to return to normal with another King, a family man like his father who would carry on the great traditions of British Monarchy and assure stability for the future.

Time alone would show whether the new attempt to rebuild the whole myth of Monarchy can in fact succeed in totally effacing the incident of Edward VIII. In the House of Commons debate that followed the announcement of the King's abdication, Mr. Maxton quoted Humpty-Dumpty:

> "All the King's horses
> and all the King's men
> could not put Humpty-Dumpty
> back again."

Shouts of "together again" came from all parts of the House. Mr. Maxton's mistake was a welcome signal to relax tension. It was pleasant to be able to correct the scansion of a misquoted nursery rhyme. But the correction did not dispose of Mr. Maxton's point. Was it or was it not true that British Monarchy could never be put together again, never completely restored to the position it had held before a week in which people had

told the truth about it and discussed it as they do any other institution, as if it were imperfect and subject to human frailty?

I hope that the freedom of the nine days in which the taboo was shattered will continue. We have been reminded of two conditions upon which in a democracy the sovereign maintains his position and his popularity. The King's mode of life must be approved by his subjects, and his name must not be used for political or party advantage. Personally I am sorry that the Government, the Church, and so large a part of the community retain so limited a conception of morality that they object to the King making an open and honourable, even if unconventional, marriage. But it is no use pretending that the King's marriage can be a purely private affair. Supposing that the King had wished to marry a sister of Hitler or a daughter of Stalin, would anyone dare to say that his marriage was entirely his own affair and had no political significance?

More important still, it has again been demonstrated that in any British crisis there will be people ready, if they get the chance, to exploit the popularity of the Monarchy for anti-democratic objects. They tried to use the Monarchy in the Ulster crisis of 1913; they were prepared to try again in 1937. They did not get very far in the abdication crisis because it happened that, owing to the combination of circumstances I have

described, official Conservatism and official Labour were ranged on the same side. But the danger was clear for all to see, and the revulsion of feeling against the attempt to form a King's party was immediate and healthy. If on another occasion it should happen to pay British Conservatism, as it did in 1913, to exploit the Monarchy for its own ends, the upshot might be different. The warning is valuable.

Whether that danger does ever reappear in England in a more menacing form depends on the attitude the British public adopts towards the Monarchy from now onwards. There is every reason to believe that King George VI will make an excellent King, the sort of sensible and constitutional first officer of State whom England wants. Cannot the British public and the British press leave it at that?

According to the thesis of democracy, the mass of the electorate may, if properly educated, learn to take an intelligent interest and to exercise an increasingly rational judgment about public affairs. The existence of a king, if he is understood to be a symbol and a figurehead, and if his constitutional position is carefully defined, is not incompatible with an increasingly rational attitude towards public affairs. It is not irrational to honour the head of the State; in so doing we are honouring ourselves and expressing our affection for the country we live in. If we realize that Monarchy

is a symbol, the King may serve our turn with less inconvenience than a president. But the danger of Monarchy lies in its magic, in the ease with which the deep-seated tendency to substitute worship for respect, to substitute personal homage for rational acceptance of a symbol, may be utilized for class or party purposes. In his recent book *Quack, Quack!* Mr. Leonard Woolf put the matter bluntly when he said that there was a chance that we might become civilized, that we might learn to love our country as Pericles loved Athens "because of its physical beauty and its traditions of justice, liberty, intelligence, and culture." In that case "the country, the King, and the people would all be civilized. It was against this danger that the ruling classes and the people reacted vigorously." The public attitude to the Monarchy, as Mr. Woolf says, has changed "because an intense propaganda by public men, in the Press, and in the cinema, has been carried on day after day for years in order to establish in the people a superstitious 'loyalty' towards the Royal Family." As a result an irrational feeling about the whole royal family has been substituted for a rational respect for the chief civil servant. Everything is done to decrease the element of rational understanding and to increase the tendency towards magic and worship. And a state of mind is created which makes a rational attitude towards political and social problems of every

kind increasingly rare and difficult. If our motor-car does not start, we do not expect, as Mr. Woolf puts it, to make it go by waving flags and muttering incantations over the engine. "But we teach the children in elementary schools that they cannot be good and loyal Englishmen unless they approach the more important political questions in the flag-waving, incantation, medicine-man frame of mind."

This cultivation of irrationality is the real danger. It is only one manifestation of the struggle that is going on throughout society, the struggle of the powerful and the privileged to keep for themselves their unequal share of the wealth and the culture which could be today open to everyone. In some countries where this struggle has reached its most acute form, propaganda has been used as the chief weapon of reaction. Though Britain is far from the position of which Dr. Goebbels boasts in Germany where, he says, the Nazis have repudiated "all the false principles of humanity," it has come perilously near repudiating the central thesis of democracy when the public is allowed to fall into a sentimental and snobbish adulation for everything royal, for the King himself, who deserves the tribute of respect and not the insult of flattery, down to the very dogs which accompany royal shooting parties and the very pheasants which, as I have seen it suggested in a society paper, are fortunate enough to fall to the royal

gun. If the British want democracy to work, they must be sensible. If they cannot be sensible about Monarchy they had better have a republic and try to be sensible about a president. At present the British still believe that Monarchy best suits their traditions and preserves their liberties. So it may do, if they take the advice of Lord Ponsonby, who wrote after the abdication crisis: "The rivets of the halo have loosened on the Crown. If we want to keep the Crown, let us finally dispense with the halo."

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